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MAURYA AND SUNGA ART

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BY

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To

SRIYUKTA SYAMAPRASAD MUKHOPADHYAYA

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PREFACE

The art of the time when the Mauryas and Śuṅgas were the paramount rulers in our country is a subject that has often been studied ; indeed, the monumental pillars of Aśoka and the elaborate bas-reliefs on the gates and railings of Barhut and Bodh-gaya are today some of the more important objects of Indian art with which those interested are most familiar. The choice of such a familiar subject for fresh and separate treatment in the form of a monograph requires therefore a word of explanation.

Let me at the outset make it clear that I am not bringing to light any fresh find, nor am I trying to say anything striking by original as to the character of form of the art of the two periods under review. My aim is to read this art in the larger context of life and hence as a related phenomenon, i.e. as one of the aspects of our cultural life in that distant past. Whilst recognising the identity and integrity of this art existing independently from other sociological phenomena, my aim is to correlate it with the latter, if possible. My main pre-occupation is therefore not only to study the character of form and technique of these two phases and aspects of our art, but also to study the causes and circumstances that conditioned the life of this art. Frankly, my method is sociological. I have therefore taken into consideration the current tastes and preferences, individual and collective, the social background, the political circumstances, the trend of thought, ethnic components, root forms, traditions, influences, history of technique etc., to elucidate the coming into being of what we call Maurya and Śuṅga art. I am not ashamed to say that archaeology dominates, since I hold that archaeological discipline is yet necessary in any consideration of the early and classical art of our country. We have yet to unearth a huge *corpus* of art objects, elucidate their chronology, sift the hundreds of literary documents, discover the reigning ideas, bring to light

the historical episodes and do so many other things before we can review the artistic achievements of our ancestors with any profit, and trace the influences and counter-influences, the genesis, growth, fulfilment and dissipation of forms and techniques. A sneering attitude towards archaeology at this stage of our art-history is therefore, in my opinion, not only idle luxury but irresponsible thinking as well.

Chronologically, the art of the Maurya and Śuṅga periods is closely related; yet no two phases and aspects of art could be so different from each other—different in their conception of form as well as in technique which made that form realisable in stone. I have tried to find out the causes and circumstances to which this difference, in my opinion, has been due. I have further tried to fix their place not only in the history of Indian art but in the history of Indian life as well. This, as far as I know, has not hitherto been attempted.

I am glad to acknowledge with thanks and gratitude the debt I owe to Prof. B. M. Barua but for whose very erudite elucidation and interpretation of Asokan epigraphs many of these pages could not have been written, to Dr. B. C. Law for his kindness extended generously to all my literary and academic undertakings, to Prof. Shahid Suhrawardy and Prof. Stella Kramrisch who patiently sat with me whilst I read out long extracts to them from my manuscript, to the Archæological Survey of India for having kindly permitted me to reproduce the photographs in their possession, to the University of Calcutta for kindly allowing me the privilege of reading out the larger part of the book as my first course of Bagisvari Lectures on Indian Art, and to my young friends Mr. Sudhirranjan Das and Mr. Sukeshchandra Chandra for occasional help in preparing the Ms. for the press, reading the proofs, and preparing the Index.

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I INTRODUCTORY

Recent archæological discoveries and historical researches have pushed the history of India back to atleast three thousand years before the birth of Christ. But the first organised art activity in India in bigger scale and durable material that we have any definite knowledge of even to this day and of which dateable examples have come down to us in any recognisable number belong to the period of the Mauryas. The chalcolithic age to which belongs the civilisation of the Indus valley has bequeathed to us relics, few in number but varied in subject and treatment, that may safely be said to belong to the domain of high art with a long artistic tradition and experience behind it. Indeed, the art represented by the reliefs on the seals and figure sculptures in the round found at Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro and other sites in the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and further north and east is already highly developed, sophisticated and conscious, and expresses most frankly and significantly the culture-ideology of a people urban in upbringing, highly sophisticated in the luxury of living, and probably industrial and feudal in socio-economic organisation. Like the civilisation itself its art also had already reached the creative climax of a tradition. Into the relation of this art with the

art of the contemporary civilised world it is not the place to enter; but it must needs be told that this art inspite of its affinities with contemporary Mediterranean art has its own essential qualities and its own character of form that link it with the art of India of the historical period.¹ Yet the fact remains that the art of the Indus valley is still largely an unknown factor in so far as it remains chronologically unrelated and unexplained and nothing definite is known of what happened along the arrow of time between the final phase of the Indus valley civilisation and the civilisation that flourished in the Ganges valley more than two thousand years later.

The earliest that the Ganges Valley is alleged to have offered to us in the shape and form of what may be called an art object is a small gold tablet representing a naked woman standing on her legs in symmetrical rigidity, 'with exaggerated hips and sexual organs, heavy and clumsy ornaments and in a rigidly angular composition.'² Dug out of a tomb near Lauriya, it was identified by Bloch, the explorer, as the iconic representation of the Earth goddess, and was ascribed by him to about the 8th or 7th century B.C. There can hardly be any doubt that such images in metal, and perhaps also in clay, served as fetishistic symbols. There are passages in the R̥ig Veda and later also in the Grihya Sūtras which can be interpreted to suggest that figures of gods and animals were fashioned in metal and clay for such purposes. A small gold tablet similar to that found at Lauriya and a small gold figure, forming part of the relics from the ruins of the Piprahwa Stūpa evidently Buddhistic, and belonging to a period not earlier than that of the Mauryas,³ reveal the same motive and treatment as those of the Lauriya tablet, so that the latter can hardly be ascribed to so early a period as has been done. Some of the oldest terracotta pieces recovered by Marshall from the ruins

of Bhita also seem to belong more or less to this category⁴; their motive, if not their treatment, is the same, so that all these objects may be taken to be typical representations of a primitive phase of imagination and expression centring round fetishistic beliefs. They are not definitely the products of any organised and conscious art movement in any considerable scale, though it must be admitted that primitive faiths and beliefs may have helped and favoured the development of sculptural and architectural art in India at a later stage of history. In any case, the Piprahwa and Lauriya gold pieces seem to be artistic representations of fetishistic symbols outside the Maurya court and represent the popular tradition of art that was later on to find its fullest expression in the reliefs of Barhut.

That this was indeed the case is fully borne out by early Buddhist and Jaina texts and supported by early Buddhist sculptural reliefs that reveal the flourishing existence, particularly in Middle and Eastern India, of a primitive religion that indulged in the worship of such symbols as the 'chaitya' which was either a holy tree or groves of trees (rukkhachetiya, vanachetiya, āramachetiya etc.), and not unfrequently these trees were the abode of gods or spirits known as vṛkshadevatās, yakshas, etc. Another important symbol that received worship was the 'stūpa', a hemispherical tumulus, either votive or commemorative. All such objects and places of primitive worship were enclosed for protection with a railing which must have given the people some scope for the play of their artistic and decorative instincts.⁵ A third object that also seems to have been an important element in the primitive religion of Middle and Eastern India was the animal standard, the 'dhvajastambha' of later Indian literature, i.e. posts or pillars crowned by animals considered sacred and therefore worshipped by primitive peoples. This trait of primitive religion was not particularly

characteristic of India alone, but was equally potent in Babylonia and Assyria as well as in ancient Greece. Later Brahmanical mythology knows of such standards or 'stambhas' of at least three different animal-gods, namely the Garuḍa, the Vṛisha and the Makara, the 'vāhanas' of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṅgā and Kandarpa respectively. Sometimes the animal was substituted by certain trees considered sacred, the Kalpadruma or the 'wishing tree', for example, and the palm tree represented by its crowning cluster of leaves.⁶ It was evidently from such early specimens of primitive animal standards made of impermanent materials like wood and bamboo etc. that Aśoka seems to have derived the inspiration of erecting monumental pillars crowned by sacred animals.

But of such objects of worship before the days of Aśoka Maurya we have hardly any remains extant, nor of the 'yaksha-devatās' or spirits referred to in a general way or specifically by name in early Buddhist and Jaina texts. Attempts have been made on epigraphic reasons to identify the two statues in the round from Patna in reddish-grey sand stone of the Chunar region and bearing 'chauris' as those of yakshas; indeed behind the shoulder of one of these statues, on the scarf is a short inscription, paleographically assignable to about the first century A.D., that may be read as yakh (o) sa (?) Vatanamdi. That they are monumental sculptural representations of yakshas there can hardly be any doubt, though persistent attempts were once made to identify them as statues of two kings of the Śaiśunāga dynasty of Magadha.⁷ This later theory is no longer seriously pressed; but it is still generally held that they belong stylistically to the later phase of Mauryan art. I shall try to show later on that the so-called Mauryan polish which is the rock-argument on which the assumption is based can hardly be considered sufficient for their being labelled as Mauryan, and that not only

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paleographically but stylistically as well they cannot belong to a period of art earlier than that represented at Sanchi and in the early primitives of Mathura.

The fact remains therefore that we have no examples extant of either sculpture or architecture that can definitely be labelled chronologically as pre-Mauryan. Indeed, all evidences suggest that whatever specimens of these two branches of visual art we know of are directly the products of the Maurya court. Except two pillars that stylistically may be ascribed to a date anterior to that of Aśoka, all the rest belong definitely to the latter's reign along with the animal figures that crown them or exist independently. The description of the city of Pāṭalīputra and of the royal palace we read of in the accounts of classical writers like Megasthenes, Arrian and Strabo and the excavations at the site of the old city by Waddel and Spooner³ to which we shall turn at a later stage may be taken to suggest that Chandragupta, the first Maurya, may have been responsible for the original initiative in the general planning and execution of the building of the city as well as of the royal palace. But there can be little doubt that Bindusāra and Aśoka, particularly the latter, added considerably to the original lay out and the buildings. The Maurya Pillared Hall and the stupendous buildings remains of which were laid bare by Spooner may have presumably been built by Aśoka himself, since their essential ideology and conception agree so remarkably well with all that we already know of the aims, ideals, motives and general ideological design of that great benevolent autocrat. Such large designs executed with almost imperial thoroughness can for all that we know be associated with his name alone. Of other architectural remains that can definitely be associated with the Maurya dynasty are a few cave-dwellings dedicated by Aśoka and his grandson Daśaratha for the

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use of the monks of the Ājīvika sect. The more important remains of Mauryan art may on proven grounds be said to include the remains of the royal palace and city of Pāṭalīputra, a monolithic rail at Sarnath, the excavated chaitya-halls or cave-dwellings in the Barabar-Nagarjuni group of hills in Gaya, the non-edict-bearing and edict-bearing pillars with their capitals, and the front half of an elephant carved out in the round from a live rock at Dhauli in Orissa⁹.

A few characteristics are common to all these sculptural and architectural remains. They are all monumental in conception and design, and inordinately fine, orderly, thorough and precise in execution. Moreover, with the exception of the remains of the royal palace and city-buildings of Pāṭalīputra, all of them were executed in hard grey sand stone of more or less big dimensions, always very finely chiselled and highly polished to a glossiness that has hardly any parallel in India at any other period of history, and in the world except ancient Iran. And thirdly, all of them were reared up directly under the shadow of the royal throne of the Mauryas, Aśoka and his grandson associating themselves with most of them. We are thus confronted here with an historical phenomenon that calls for an explanation. Here we are faced with a period in ancient Indian history when a royal dynasty with imperial ambition and outlook suddenly discards wood and bamboo, and perhaps also brick, ivory, metal, and clay, and takes to the employment of stone as the material *par excellence* for monumental sculpture and architecture, and that this new material is handled with such perfect ease and mastery as to suggest that the art of hard and large-size stone-cutting was as it were already long in practice. Except those carved out of live rock, all removable pieces were worked out of grey sand stone quarried at Chunar; the Mauryan columns are all carved

out of this material, and it should be remembered that these huge columns are distributed over a very wide area, between Delhi in the west, Basarh in the east and Sanchi in the south. Most certainly the huge resources of the state made available to the artists, rendered possible the conception, planning and execution in such large and gigantic proportions. But royal will and state resources alone cannot explain the sudden transformation from wood, sun-dried brick, clay, ivory and metal to stone, or from fine workmanship and exquisite finish of ivory and metal work to bold and rounded work in stone of huge dimensions. It is possible to postulate that similar bold and large scale work was long in practice in wood in pre-Mauryan days, and what the Maurya emperors did was only to initiate the artists and art-guilds into the use of stone and translate their traditional skill in terms of a new material. Such an explanation is certainly admissible. One has only to read through the description of the city and royal palace of Pataliputra left by classical scholars,¹⁰ and examine the design and execution of many an architectural element of the Maurya, Śunga and other early Indian monuments, e.g. the pillars, the railings, the gates, the chaitya-facades, etc. and be convinced of the force of the argument.¹¹ But the very fact that stone henceforward became the most important material for Indian plastic art is by itself significant; equally significant is that stone sculpture when it first comes to view in India during the Maurya period is already the expression of a civilised, sophisticated and fully developed art that had generations of artistic effort, experience and tradition behind it, that it is a work in the round, that it exists by itself and is borne by its own volume and strength, and that it has an inherent technical and psychological character that the carpenter's art fails to explain and account for. Indeed, past artistic tradition and the art of the wood, clay, ivory, mineral stone

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and metal worker in howsoever large a scale and with whatever technical skill and efficiency cannot fully explain the art-tradition Mauryan sculptures represent, or the technical skill and efficiency of of the Mauryan sculptor who worked in stone of huge and heavy proportions, and the atmosphere the sculptures themselves breathe.

II SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Any attempt at an explanation of the phenomenon referred to above must take into account the state of artistic effort and activities in India itself during the centuries immediately preceding that of the Mauryas; i.e. during the period dominated by the Haryāṅka, the Śaiśunāga and the Nanda dynasties on the one hand, and the place of India, especially Northern India, in the entire culture-complex of the early Asiatic world, on the other. It will also be necessary to consider at the same time the historical and cultural forces that were at work at the Mauryan court which was directly responsible for Mauryan art.

The Brahmanical sūtras and the Buddhist jātakas reflect to a very great extent the art and culture of Northern India during the centuries of Haryāṅka, Śaiśunāga and Nanda domination. Storeyed buildings, presumably of wood and brick, were already widely known and mention is made of round and square huts perhaps of wood and bamboo. An advanced knowledge of the use of metals like tin, lead, silver, copper and iron shaped and formed into objects meant for various domestic and other purposes is already known from later Vedic texts, and the jātakas reveal that there were eighteen different kinds of 'śilpas' or arts and crafts including carpentry, smithery, leather-dressing and painting. Metal workers in general were probably known by the word 'kammāra' (sans.

Karmakāra), and there are definite evidences to show that these artists and craftsmen were organised into guilds. Localisation of certain industrial crafts also took place to the extent that an entire village or a particular locality in a town came to be designated according to the craft pursued there. The jātakas also afford a more or less vivid picture of contemporary city and village life, villages with scattered huts made of wood, bamboo and reed, cities with roads and lanes lined with buildings of brick and wood, all set off against the background of an agricultural, industrial and commercial life in small scale and within narrow proportions.¹² With the exception of certain stories in the Mahābhārata, there is nothing else to suggest that the canyvas of contemporary life was large enough and that it was conceived in any magnificent and monumental scale. Tribal and primitive was indeed the character of the social psychology of Northern India during these centuries. This tribal and primitive outlook is also fully in evidence in the remains of the old city of Rājagriha with its walls and remains of dwellings built of rough cyclopean masonry¹³ which is the one definite architectural example that can be said to belong to pre-Mauryan times.

But a slow and steady widening of the tribal and primitive outlook was being effected in the political sphere. Already in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa we hear of such sacrifices as the 'Rājasūya' and the 'Aindra-mahābhisheka', of 'Sārvabhauma' kings, of paramount rule and of all-encompassing sovereignty. The same political conception of 'rājā sārva-bhauma' is repeated in Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra, and that of 'rājā chakravatti' in early Buddhist and Jaina texts.¹⁴ In reality however the normal political condition of Northern India till the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. was not that of an empire of any considerable

extent under a 'sāryabhauma' monarch but it was that of separate small and independent states and kingdoms under a king or tribal leader. It was only towards the third quarter of the fourth century B. C. that the ideal was partially achieved in the person of Mahāpadmananda who has been referred to in the Purāṇas as 'sarvarājochchhettā', 'sarvakshatrāntaka nripaḥ' and 'ekarāt', the supreme monarch, and one of his sons, the last of the dynasty, as the powerful monarch of the Prasii and the Gangaridai, in the accounts of classical historians. Politically, India was thus slowly but steadily growing out of its tribal psychological outlook which was sure eventually to influence the social and cultural outlook of the leading sections of the people.

Whether the evolution of such a political outlook was the outcome of natural historical process or was directly or indirectly conditioned by India's contact with the contemporary West-Asiatic world, is difficult to say. In any case the chronological and historical background is significant and is worth consideration. Already in pre-historic times, the Indus Valley civilisation formed a part of the civilisation that extended to ancient Sumer; much later, the civilisation represented by the R̥gveda was but a cognate of that represented by the Āvestā. There is no reason to assume that this intimate relation of India with Iran and the ancient Asiatic West lapsed at any time during the centuries that followed. Indeed, from about 800 B. C. almost continuous contact of Aryanised India with Iran can be traced back to or inferred from various sources, literary and archaeological. In the sixth century B. C. part of Northern India went under the political domination of Iran, and gradually the Indus came to form the eastern boundary of the wide Iranian empire of Darius; indeed this part of India came to be politically organised into the 20th satrapy

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of that empire.¹⁵ Darius describes himself in his inscriptions as 'Kshayathiyānam Kshayathiya', the king of kings, the great king;¹⁶ he was in reality a 'sārvabhauma' monarch of the old Indian conception, an 'ekarāt' like Mahāpadmananda.¹⁷ Indeed the Achaemenid dynasty was the first to evolve and give reality to the idea of imperial suzerainty which a century later was partially achieved by the Nandas, but fully by the Mauryas.¹⁸ Certainly no contemporary borrowing can at once be postulated, but it is likely that both India and Iran participated in a common historical process.

This is more evident in the domain of art and general culture. Indeed early Indian art can be viewed and understood fully only against the background of the age-old but very potent and effective Indo-Sumerian and Indo-Iranian contacts maintained through long centuries. In Maurya, Śunga, Āndhra and Kushāṇa art, there is a rich treasure of art and decorative motifs, ornamentations, devices and patterns that we meet with for the first time and which at once suggest "parallels in Sumerian, Hittite, Assyrian, Mykenean, Cretan, Trojan, Lykian, Phoenician, Achaemenid and Scythian cultures." Coomaraswamy gives a long list of such common elements and technical analogies, and finally argues that "so far as its constituent elements are concerned, and apart from any question of style, there is comparatively little in Indian decorative art that is peculiar to India and much that India shares with Western Asia." It is difficult to disagree with Coomaraswamy when further he says :

All this amounts to proof that the themes and motifs of pre-Maurya art cannot have differed very greatly from those of Maurya and Śunga; fantastic animals, palmettes, rosettes and bell-capitals must have been common elements of craftsman's repertory under the Nandas as in the time of Aśoka. India, in centuries and perhaps millenniums B.C. was an integral part of an 'Ancient East' that extended from the Mediterranean to the Ganges valley.¹⁹

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Apart from India's forming an integral part of an 'Ancient East' and sharing in a common cultural heritage from very early times, there is more or less definite evidence of intimate cultural contact of India with Iran in particular from about the eighth and seventh centuries B. C. The North-west and the Indus Valley forming a part of the empire of Darius made contacts with Iran easier still. This intimate contact must have been responsible for certain elements in Buddhist and later Brahmanical mythology, tradition, worship and iconography, especially those connected with the cults of the Sun and the Fire.¹⁹ It was also responsible for the origin and evolution of the Kharoshthī script in about the fifth or fourth century B. C. An Aramaic inscription belonging to about the fourth century B. C. has actually been found at Taxila.²⁰ The Haryāṇkas, the Śāśunāgas and the Nandas must have more or less felt the pressure of this contact, but since their dominions lay far away from the regions where presumably the effects of the impact of the two civilisations were directly felt, Eastern India was perhaps only indirectly touched by Iranian contacts.

With the coming of the Mauryas to power on the throne of Pāṭalīputra, with the building up of an all-India empire by Chandragupta extending upto modern Afghanistan and therefore touching almost what had once been the heart of Achaemenid power and culture, with the establishment of intimate friendly relations with contemporary Hellenistic powers and intimate contacts of Maurya kings and court with Greek political and cultural representatives from Graeco-Bactrian courts and kingdoms, the situation however took a new turn. The Achaemenid empire had long gone to dust and India had ceased to form a part of that empire. In 330 B. C. Alexander

the Great overthrew the once mighty Persian Empire, but in the process of consolidating his conquest the Greek conqueror felt the overpowering influence of Achaemenian imperialism and Achaemenian art and culture to both of which he fell an easy prey. Plutarch has left us a long and vivid description of how Alexander behaved himself at Persepolis and how he worked for a fusion of the cultures of Greece and Iran of the Medo-Achaemenid monarchs. Donned in the robes of Iranian monarchs he used to sit on the throne of Darius under a golden canopy. He himself married Darius's daughter Statira, and married his Greek friends to Iranian ladies; one of these friends was Seleukus, later known as Seleukus Nikator, who married Apama, the daughter of Spitamenes. Not satisfied with having simply adopted somewhat the Persian mode of dress, Alexander, says Plutarch, "accommodated himself more than ever to the manner of the Asiatics, and at the same time persuaded them to adopt some of the Macedonian fashions; for by a mixture of both he thought a union might be promoted, much better than by force, and his authority maintained even when he was at a distance. For the same reason he elected thirty thousand (Persian) boys and gave them masters to instruct them in Grecian literature as well as train them to arms in the Macedonian manner."²¹

The same process seems to have been fully at work in the realm of art. Colonial Hellenistic art was slowly coming under the influence of Persian art, specially of Persian motifs, patterns and designs on the one hand, while Persian art itself began to feel the pressure of Ionian and Hellenistic influences onwards from the fifth century B. C.²² This pressure became active during and after the Achaemenid period, so that when the Mauryas came into intimate contact with the colonial

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Greeks of Western Asia, both Achaemenid and Hellenistic art-traditions had become heavily touched by each other."

After the withdrawal of the Macedonian army of Alexander, and the establishment of an alliance *jus connubii* of Chandragupta Maurya with Seleukus, the Mauryas came into very intimate friendly relations with the Seleukid Greek houses, and this relation continued from generation to generation. Besides contracting a matrimonial alliance Chandragupta repeatedly received Megasthenes, an officer from Arachosia, as an ambassador from Seleukus; is reported to have sent Seleukus some strange Indian drugs presumably through his own envoy, and is further said to have been used to offer sacrifices in Hellenic manner to Alexander's altars on the Hyphasis. The ceremonial at the court of this king described by classical writers also reveal Achaemenian influence.²³ His son Bindusāra had in his court a Greek envoy, Deimachus of Plataea, sent by Antiochus Soter, son of Seleukus. Bindusāra also like his father seems to have been a Hellenophile; he wrote back to Antiochus requesting him to buy and send on to him sweet wine, dried figs and a Greek sophist. From Antiochus came the reply: "we shall send you dried figs and sweet wine, but it is not lawful in Greece to sell a sophist." Diodorus speaks of a Greek author Iamboulos by name who found his way to the king of Palibothra, and this king of Palibothra, presumably Bindusāra or atleast one of the first three Maurya monarchs, "is credited with having a great love for the Grecians."²⁴ The court of Bindusāra or of his son was visited by a Greek envoy Dionysius sent by Ptolemy (II) Philadelphos, King of Egypt, while Deimachus was another Greek ambassador from the king of Syria who presented his credentials to Bindusāra. If the evidence of Dion Chrysostom

s to be believed, the Indians sang the poetry of Homer which was translated into Indian language and Indian mode of expression. Aśoka's friendly relations with the Tuvanas or the Greek states of Western Asia and Egypt are much to well-known; the world that he claims to have contacted in pursuance of his policy of 'Dhammavijaya' was pre-eminently this Hellenistic world; he arranged for the medical treatment of men and cattle among others in the dominions of Antiochus Theos and his neighbours; he despatched 'dūtas' or envoys to the realms of the five Greek frontagers to initiate or encourage various works of piety and public utility, to inculcate the principles of Dhamma, and further to assure his frontagers of his sincere desire to respect their territorial integrity, and of his solicitude and good will.

Both Megasthenes and Kauṭilya refer to a state department run and maintained specifically for the purpose of looking after foreigners²⁴ who evidently were quite numerous not only in the capital city of Pāṭalīputra but in other provincial capitals and trade centres as well. There can hardly be any doubt that these foreigners were mostly colonial Greeks and a very large majority of them were merchants and businessmen. Indeed in the third century B. C. a caravan high way ran from Taxila via Kandahar, Persepolis and Susa to Seleukeia on the Tigris, while another old main road ran via Kandahar, Heerat, Hekatompylos, Ekbatana and Seleukeia and was joined by the Taxila-Kabul-Bactria route.²⁵ Taxila, it is well-known, was the seat of an important Maurya province, and from here a great high way ran direct to connect Pāṭalīputra with the Hellenic East. Besides, there was also a coastal sea-borne trade route to Seleukeia along the Persian Gulf and up the

Tigris, and to Egypt following the coastal line. It is this trade route that explains the Aramaic inscription referred to above and dateable in the fourth century B. C. It was along this route also that foreigners including Greek envoys, traders, travellers, artists and craftsmen must have flocked to Maurya India in such numbers as to oblige the state to maintain a department to look after their comfort and well-being. This intimate contact indeed explains such finds as the fragmentary handle of a terracotta vase showing Alexander's head in lion's skin recovered from Taxila,²⁶ or random finds from Sarnath, Basarh and the Patna region of terracotta pieces of distinctive Hellenistic appearance or with definite Hellenistic motifs and designs.²⁷ That they belong probably to a later date does not minimise the importance of the very intimate relations the Maurya court maintained with the Hellenic East; rather they point to the fact that even after the decline and downfall of the Mauryas parts of India continued to remain in touch with the Hellenistic world. Was it not that within a quarter of a century after the death of Aśoka a Greek army crossed the Hindukush and penetrated into the east as far as Sāketa (in Ayodhyā), the Pañchāla country, Mathurā and Pāṭalīputra?

The phil-Hellenism of the Maurya kings and court is indeed beyond doubt, and it must have been their intimate relation with the Hellenistic East that also brought them into an indirect contact with the art and culture of the Achaemenids. The grandiose and magnificent monuments of the Achaemenid monarchs had still been standing when the Mauryas came to exercise all-India suzerainty and Maurya art was making its appearance. Certain Achaemenian forms and motifs had presumably already migrated to the Punjab and the Indus Valley during the Achaemenian occupation of the region.

Excavations at the Bhir mound at Taxila long ago yielded from the pre-Hellenistic strata a scaraboid of steatite exhibiting a winged stag which is reminiscent of similar objects of Achaemenian origin.²⁸ "The Indian punch-marked silver coinage struck on the Persian standard represented perhaps the Achaemenian coinage for India."²⁹ But even after the extinction of Achaemenian power importation of Achaemenian art objects to India seems to have continued. Curtius, Diodorus and Arrian state that Alexander presented to the king of Taxila, among other things a large number of gold and silver vessels and an enormous quantity of Babylonian and Persian embroideries from the treasury of old Persian monarchs.³⁰ It has also been pointed out that a few minor antiquities found in the upper strata of the Bhir mound excavations "reflect the influence of Achaemenian art." Among these four bangles of thin beaten gold with their heads terminating in lion's heads and a few fragments of pottery from the side of a vase decorated with the conventional leaf design and reminiscent of the capitals of well-known Asoka pillars, are particularly noteworthy. Moreover, a polished sandstone head from Sarnath wearing a crenellated crown, the method of wearing the waist cloth without the 'kachhha' as we find in the two Patna 'yaksha' statues in the Indian Museum and the coiled armlets of the same figures inevitably recall Achaemenian parallels.³¹ It is evident that the trade routes referred to above opened up avenues through which Maurya India came to acquire more direct and intimate contact with Medo-Achaemenian art and culture, perhaps through Greek intermediaries.

But the more important evidence of Achaemenian cultural influence on the Maurya court and Maurya cultural ideology is afforded by the accounts of the city and royal palace of

Pāṭalīputra left by classical authors evidently following Megasthenes and by the actual remains of the same city and palace unearthed by Waddell and Spooner.³² We have it in Strabo that the city of Palibothra was situated at the confluence of the Ganges and the Erannoboas (Hiranyavāha, the modern Son); it was 80 stadia in length and 15 in breadth and was of the shape of a parallelogram. The city was surrounded by a wooden wall pierced with loop-holes for the discharge of arrows, crowned with 560 towers and provided with 60 gates. In sumptuousness and magnificence according to Strabo, Pāṭalīputra compared very favourably with Susa and Ekbatana. Waddell's excavations actually laid bare the remains of what had been once the city wall, and Spooner later brought to light remains of huge wooden buildings at Bulandibagh and Kumrahar, both near Patna. The remains of one of these buildings are of particular significance—those of a pillared hall in which stone columns were employed to support the roof. Of the eighty pillars that had once stood on a wooden platform and supported a wooden roof Spooner was able to discover the entire lower part of at least one in almost perfect condition; it is more or less like an Asokan pillar, smooth, highly polished and made of grey Chunar sand-stone. Writing about Indian towns Arrian says, "All their towns which are down beside the rivers or the sea are made of wood; for towns built of brick would never hold out for any length of time with the rains on the one hand, and on the other, the rivers which rise above their banks and spread a sheet of water over the plains. But the towns which are built on elevated places out of reach, these are built of brick and clay." The excavations of Waddell and Spooner admirably confirm what we are told by Strabo, Arrian and early Sanskrit and Pali writers, and constitute one

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more proof of the fact that before the employment of stone for building purposes, wood was generally the only material for even the most sumptuous and magnificent buildings. Spooner's excavations however revealed for the first time that stone was employed for building purposes in at least one building of the Maurya royal city, and that it was a pillared hall. That the magnificent palaces of Pāṭalīputra reminded Strabo who evidently followed Megasthenes, of the palaces of Susa and Ekbatana is not without significance when it is remembered that the Maurya Pillared Hall reminded Spooner of the famous Hall of Hundred Columns erected at Persepolis by Darius the Great. "Whereas no other structure of really early date in ancient India disclosed", says Spooner, "an arrangement of pillars in square bays over the whole floor the hall at Kumrahar did show this otherwise unparalleled arrangement, and this was identical with the arrangement of the pillars in the Achaemenian Hall. The columns themselves moreover showed a technique in their polished surface which is not only known to have been un-Indian, and outside the line of Indian architectural development, but which again is identical with Persepolitan workmanship." Apart from the question of the origin and morphology of the Asokan columns, it is not unlikely that the Maurya Pillared Hall owed its inspiration and general design to the Hall of Hundred columns erected by Darius. We have it on the authority of classical writers that Chandragupta's palace at Pāṭalīputra consisted of halls whose gilded pillars were adorned with golden vines and silver birds; indeed fragments of golden vines have been discovered in the excavations at Kumrahar. We know that the halls of the palaces of Ekbatana had gilded pillars constructed of cedar and cypress, and golden vines of the pillars

invariably recall the vines hanging over the couch of Darius, a gift of the Lydian Pythias and perhaps of Ionian workmanship. It is difficult to say whether the Maurya Pillared Hall at Pāṭalīputra was the conception of Chandragupta himself or one of his successors—personally I think it was built at the direction of Aśoka—, but there can be no doubt that one of the first three Maurya emperors was responsible for it, nor is it unlikely that “this adoption of the Persepolitan style of building at Pāṭalīputra was not the normal result of the contact of the Achaemenian and Indian sculptors, but was due to conscious adoption of the plan of the Achaemenian Hall of Public Audience by the Mauryan emperor (Aśoka) as a part of the paraphernalia of his imperialism...”³³

It has been argued with some force that Mauryan imperialism as revealed in the inscriptions of Aśoka was largely influenced by the imperial ideology of the Hellenistic and Achaemenian monarchs.³⁴ This may not be altogether unlikely, but be that as it may the fact remains that the inscriptions themselves indicate the extent to which Aśoka was indebted to his great Achaemenian predecessor Darius, not only for the idea of making his royal edicts known throughout his empire but also for the form of the inscriptions themselves.³⁵ At the end of the Susian version of the Behistun inscription of Darius we have the following :

“(Thus) Saith Darius, the king : By the grace of Auramazda I made inscriptions in another fashion...such as was not formerly...and it was written and I...then I sent the same inscriptions into all lands, and the people...”

The duplicate copies were evidently written on leather or brick. This was also the arrangement made by Aśoka for the circulation of his edicts (R. E. XXIV ; Kalinga Edict I ; P. E. VII).

The very idea of recording royal orders and directions on such permanent material as rocks (and pillars) seems to have been inspired by Achaemenian practice. In respect of the form of the Asokan inscriptions Senart long ago pointed out their strong resemblance with that of the inscriptions of the Achaemenian kings. The edicts of Aśoka begin with the usual formula 'Devānampiya Piyadasi evamāha' which according to Senart, "is an absolutely isolated example in Indian epigraphy... In the entire series of the inscriptions of the Achaemenides, from Darius to Artaxerxes Ochus, the phrase 'thatēy Daray-avaush Kshayathiya', 'thus saith the king Darius', or its equivalent 'thatēy Kshayarsha' etc., inevitably forms the preamble of each of the proclamations. In both cases, this phrase in the third person is immediately succeeded by the use of the first person, and we are still further justified in drawing attention to this curious fact that again in both cases the same word—'dipi', 'lipi'—is used to designate the inscriptions, and that, as we have seen, we are led to admit, on altogether independent grounds, that the Indian form of the word was originally borrowed from Persian." One may not fully agree with Senart in his contention, since the 'Arthaśāstra' ascribes a similar formula for royal proclamations, and early Buddhist texts make constant use of such archaic and conventional phrases as 'Tathāgato āho', 'evamvādi Mahāsamaṇo' etc. Indeed one has to agree with Prof. Barua when he points out that the Asokan formula probably originated from the Indian literary convention that can be traced to even such Upanishadic phrases as 'hovācha Yājñavalkya', 'evamāhur' 'manishinaḥ' etc. But the fact remains that the whole character of Asokan epigraphs including their form has an undeniable family likeness with Achaemenian inscriptions, and has nothing

to connect them with later Indian epigraphy. Aśoka's peculiar way of exhorting people to follow the laws of Dhamma also seems to have been adopted from Achaemenian practice initiated by Darius in his Behistun and Naksh i-Rustam inscriptions⁸⁶.

Two important facts emerge. First, that whatever extant remains we can lay our hands on as definitely belonging to the Maurya period are products of the Maurya court, i.e. they were worked out by orders of the Maurya monarchs and perhaps also under their direct supervision. Secondly, that this court and its presiding lords were all ardent Hellenophiles and was largely under the influence of Achaemenian art and culture at the same time. It is to this second factor that we can ascribe the fixation of Indian art in permanent materials during this period for the first time and the handling of stone for sculptural and architectural purposes with perfect ease and efficiency. At the same time it has to be recognised that there existed in India a pre-Mauryan art mainly practised in wood and partly in sundried brick, clay, ivory, metal and mineral stone. Admittedly this art could hardly conceive life and things in huge proportions and large dimensions. Tribal and primitive outlook circumscribed the vision of the artists and craftsmen who must also have been handicapped by the very nature of the materials they used. But this art happened to be the repository of certain patterns, designs and motifs that India shared in common with the rest of the early Asiatic world.

For the rest, we know from Megasthenes, Kauṭilya and the inscriptions of Aśoka himself that the Maurya administration was a highly centralised one supported and strengthened by a tight bureaucracy, and the Maurya monarch nothing short

of a benevolent autocrat. Aśoka's 'Dhammavijaya' was more an imperial policy than a religious missionary movement and his moral exhortations to his people had almost the force of law behind them. He had even gone to the length of regulating the social and religious life of his people according to his conception of Dhamma. It must also be taken into account that Aśoka, if one has to go by what he himself says in R. E. I, IV and IX, was averse to popular demonstrations of religion as well as to certain kinds of 'samājas' or festive gatherings and to auspicious rites and rituals performed by the ordinary people, particularly by the women-folk. It is clear further that his Dhamma was nothing but an abstract code of certain ethical principles of more or less universal recognition, and that his methods for the propagation of his Dhamma had almost the force of law behind them. To all these points I shall have occasion to turn at a later stage; here it would suffice to point out that the king and the court were both highly conscious of their power and their imperial glory; Aśoka's inscriptions breathe the very air of this consciousness. And if the 'Arthaśāstra' of Kauṭilya is to be believed, law, order and precision were the watchwords of the Mauryan government. This is surprisingly reflected in the writings of the inscriptions themselves; not only are they beautifully executed, but they are indeed remarkable for their clarity, orderliness and precision; every single letter is cut into the stone with remarkable accuracy and carefulness, lines are more often than not straight and well-ordered, and mistakes, considering the enormous output, few and far between. The socio-economic policy of the Mauryan state, it must be taken into account, was also highly centralised and monopolistic. Mauryan art has to be viewed and understood against this historical, cultural and sociological background.

This would help us to understand the character and ideology of Mauryan art.

III

MAURYAN COLUMNS

The highly polished, tall and well-proportioned columns with slightly tapering monolithic shafts and standing free in space, complete and independent by themselves, are admittedly the best representatives of the court art of the Mauryas. The columns that bear the edicts of Aśoka include those of Delhi-Mirat, Allahabad, Lauriya-Araraj, Lauriya-Nandangarh, Rampurva (with lion capital), Delhi-Topra, Sāñkiśya, Sanchi and Sarnath ; the non-edict bearing columns known up till now include those of Rampurva (with bull capital), Basarh-Bakhira (with single lion capital) and Kosam (capital not yet recovered) ; the third category, that of columns bearing dedicatory inscriptions, includes atleast two well-known specimens, those of Rummindei and Nigali Sagar. Of these the capitals of Basarh-Bakhira and Lauriya-Nandangarh pillars are *in situ* ; those of Rampurva (both bull and lion-crowned), Sāñkiśya, Sarnath and Sanchi have been recovered in more or less damaged condition. The Lauriya-Nandangarh and Basarh-Bakhira pillars and one of the two Rampurva columns is crowned by a single lion seated on its haunches ; the Sāñkiśya pillar by a standing elephant ; the second Rampurva column by a standing bull ; and the Sarnath and Sanchi columns by four semi-lions united back to back. The Lauriya-Araraj column seems once to have been crowned by a Garuḍa capital,⁸⁷ while the fragment of a capital of Chunar sand-stone with Mauryan polish and probably of Mauryan date, recovered

from a village called Salempur, Muzaffarpur district, shows that it consisted of four semi-bulls seated back to back on a plain square abacus, the animals themselves being super-imposed by a square block decorated with honey-suckle ornaments. It was more than once suggested that the Rummindei Pillar was once crowned by a horse,⁸⁸ but Prof. Barua thinks that the word 'vigada' means 'young elephant'.

It has been suggested on an eighth century Sinhalese parallel that these crowning animals—elephant, horse (?), bull and lion—should be considered as guardians of the four cardinal points.⁸⁹ It is doubtful if this interpretation can with equal force be given to the Asokan animal capitals. Nor can it definitely be said they are all even exclusively Buddhist symbols. Except the horse, the three other animals as well as the Garuḍa that is assumed to have once crowned the Lauriya-Araraj pillar are symbols associated with early Brahmanical tradition and mythology, though the elephant, especially the white elephant, was considered particularly sacred in Buddha-legend as well (cf. also the Dhauli elephant and the word 'seto' or the 'white one' at the end of the sixth Dhauli R. E.; the phrase alluding to the white elephant below the thirteenth Girnar R. E.; the word 'gajatame' or the 'best of elephants' and the drawing of an elephant on the north face of the Kalsi rock). Moreover, a close study of the Rupnath and Sahasram Rock inscriptions and the seventh Pillar Edict suggests definitely that some of the pillars bearing his edicts must have been in existence before Aśoka chose to have his rescripts on morality engraved on them; they may even be pre-Asokan, and consequently may have nothing to do with Buddhism, while others were erected by Aśoka himself and were his own Dharmastambhas. And lastly, it has been argued with some force that these pillars

with animal capitals are but translations in stone of primitive animal standards.⁴⁰

The internal evidence of the inscriptions themselves helps us to arrive at a rough chronological sequence of the columns. The Rummindei pillar was raised in the 20th year of the great monarch's reign while the Rampurva column with the lion capital in the 26th year, followed a year later by the Lauriya-Nandangarh column bearing the six pillar edicts dated in the 27th year. The Sarnath pillar could not have been raised before the 28th year; it bears edicts that do not find place in other columns. In any case, all scholars agree that this column belongs to the last years of Aśoka's reign.

We may add to this the stylistic evidence afforded by the columns and capitals themselves. So far as columns are concerned a definite starting point is furnished by the one at Bāsarh-Bakhira which is probably pre-Asokan. Compared with the other columns of known Asokan dates the shaft of this column is heavy and of shorter proportions, and its workmanship crude and rough. The plain square abacus which is by itself an almost sure indication of an earlier date has no integral relation with the bell-capital below, and is moreover heavy in proportion. The crowning lion 'recouchant', though a free and independent figure, is not only rough and crude in execution, but has not yet evolved the form and appearance so as to make of itself an integrated whole together with the shaft, capital and the abacus. The next milestone is furnished by the elephant-crowned Sāṅkāśya column. The clumsy and heavy workmanship of the animal, its plump shape, and the sense of form seem to suggest a near parallel with the Dhauli elephant which has to be dated in the twelfth or thirteenth year of the reign of Aśoka. The filling up of the depth between the legs by rock-designs and

the decorations of the abacus framed only at the lower border are both primitive and are presumably translated from wooden designs; the border decoration is particularly reminiscent of wood. But already the abacus has changed from square to round and has been given a form that keeps rhythmic balance between the animal above and the capital below. The bull-crowned Rampurva pillar seems to form a pair with the one just described so far as stylistic chronology is concerned or comes not very long after. The crowning bull though rendered with energy and evident naturalism indeed fails to keep harmony with the abacus and the capital, and the rosettas and honey-suckle decoration on the abacus itself is a little bit heavy and rough in execution. But it cannot be far out in date from either the lion-crowned Rampurva column or the similarly crowned Lauriya-Nandangarh column. In both instances the abacus which is artistically integrated and harmonised with the capital below is decorated with a row of pecking geese; but while the Rampurva lion is entirely contained within the abacus, the Nandangarh lion finds it difficult to fit itself into the round abacus; its rump and part of its hind legs project beyond the abacus in an unbalanced manner. The last stage in the evolution is marked by the Sarnath and Sanchi pillars, both crowned by four semi-lions joined back to back at the shoulders and carrying the Buddhist symbol of the wheel, instead of by a big single animal as had hitherto been the practice, and that without any crowning symbol. The Salempur column crowned by four semi-bulls joined back to back must also belong to this stage of evolution.

We shall try to see at a later stage to what extent this chronological sequence is upheld or not by a stylistic analysis of the animal sculptures themselves.

A clear idea of the whole and of component parts of a

Maurya column is afforded by the one at Lauriya-Nandangarh which is a perfect specimen of the long series of such columns. All Maurya columns, no matter where they are set up, are chiselled out of grey Chunar sand stone and have a lustrous polish due to the application perhaps of silicious varnish on the stone. This uniform place of origin of the material probably suggests that there was at or near Chunar an art centre established and patronised directly by the Maurya court, an assumption supported by the additional fact that all the component parts of the columns including the crowning animal, abacus and the shaft tend increasingly to form one whole so far as art-form is concerned. At least this had been the problem the artists were confronted with and which they tried to solve with increasing success. The component parts that are easily known are (1) the shaft, always plain and smooth, circular in section and slightly tapering upwards, without any base whatsoever, and always and invariably chiselled out of one piece of stone; (2) the capital, having the shape and appearance of a gently arched bell formed of lotus-petals, the proportionate ratio of breadth and height being variable from capital to capital, and joined with the shaft by a copper-bolt of cylindrical shape bulging in the middle (cf. the Rampurva lion-capital column and the copper-bolt that used once to connect the capital with the shaft); (3) the abacus, square and plain in the earlier specimens and circular and decorated in the later ones, and of variable proportions; and (4) the crowning animal, seated or standing, always and invariably in the round, and always constituting a single piece with the abacus. The constituent elements may now be taken up one by one.

The surface of the shaft as of the other elements is cut and executed with remarkable precision and accuracy,

and except in the case of the Basarh-Bakhira pillar which is heavy and massive, the shafts, to judge by the Lauriya-Nandangarh example as well as by the fragments of other columns, seem to have maintained a graceful and elegant proportion throughout. They are maintained in position by simply being buried in the earth and by plain slabs of stone or plain brickwork at the bottom. This gives them an appearance of stability, as if they stand by their own weight. The shaft is super-imposed by the bell-shaped capital. In some cases, as in the Rummindei column, the transition from the shaft to the capital is abrupt, while in other instances it is made easy and gradual by the introduction of intermediate mouldings of variable stages and designs. On the Basarh-Bakhira column there are three retreating mouldings decorated with rope-bead-reel designs. Similar mouldings are to be seen in the Lauriya-Nandangarh example as well; elsewhere the mouldings are plain. The surface of gently arched bell-shaped capital is decorated with highly stylised longitudinal lotus petals with sharp and thin ridges in the middle and wide and roundish border mouldings, the spaces between the ends of the petals being filled up with short mouldings. In the earliest Mauryan example, i. e. in the Basarh-Bakhira specimen, the transition from the capital to the square abacus is marked by a cable-moulding of West-Asiatic twisted rope design which is repeated in later examples also, except in the lion-topped Rampurva and Sarnath examples. In other Mauryan examples the formal appearance of the capital is the same, but there is a progressive attempt towards a clearer and sharper definition of the middle ridge and of the border mouldings, and increasing stylisation; both are fully in evidence in the Sarnath specimen. The real aesthetic significance of the beautifully arched and

elegantly ribbed floral bell of the Mauryan capital lies in its gentle curve, its chaste and rhythmic proportion and in its very effective contrast with the chaste and elegant, plain and smooth, tall and tapering shaft that it crowns. The capital like the abacus and the shaft also shows different stages of a process of artistic evolution, though the chronological sequence cannot be definitely established; but the steady growth of the feeling for form and more and more linear rhythm is unmistakable. The abacus is indeed the pedestal for the crowning animal; in the change of its form from square to round, of its appearance from plain to decorated surface beginning with low and culminating in bold and high relief work in various motifs and designs, and in the attempt for increasing harmonisation of the abacus with the bell-shaped capital below and the crowning animal above, a discerning eye can clearly trace the stages of the progressive evolution of an architectonic form existing by itself. This becomes further evident when one compares the entire ensemble formed by the crowning animal, the abacus and the capital as we see it in various stages from the Basarh-Bakhira example through Sāṅkāśya and Rampurva to Sarnath. Beginning from disjointed and ununified parts of unequal proportions and a broken linear rhythm at Basarh-Bakhira it steadily marches towards integration of the component parts into one whole until it reaches its perfection at Sarnath where the parts are clear, distinct and well-defined, well-proportioned and singularly evenly balanced and yet forming one integrated whole and maintaining a linear rhythm through out, so much so that the crowning elements on the shaft contribute the most positive character that gives the Maurya columns the independent effect of complete monumental works. From primitive animal standards to such monumental works it must

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have been a long journey, but royal will and state resources, individual taste and ideology of a benevolent autocrat and perhaps also foreign hand and inspiration so potently at work at the Maurya court achieved the end of this long and arduous journey within a very short space of time. The total aesthetic effect of Maurya columns has never been surpassed in later Indian art, and in the whole realm of independent monumental columns of the world Mauryan columns occupy a proud position by reason of their very free and significant artistic form in space, the rhythmic and balanced proportion of their constituent elements, the unitary and integrated effect of the whole, their chaste and elegant shaft and capital and no less by the conscious, proud and dignified attitude of the crowning ornaments.

There can be no doubt that the impetus came from outside. The very sudden use of stone and that at once for monumental art of large designs and huge proportions, the quick process of evolution from primitive to conscious, civilised and sophisticated form and appearance, from tribal to imperial outlook that is evident in the total effect of the columns, point unmistakably in that direction. It has been repeatedly suggested, not without reason, that this extraneous impetus and inspiration came from Iran of the Achaemenid emperors; some have even suggested that Mauryan columns are but Indian adaptations of the Achaemenian prototype. As repeatedly attempts have been made to deny the alleged extent of debt, again not without a certain amount of justice; but few have seriously doubted that West-Asiatic art forms and inspiration indirectly and in general and Achaemenian impetus and inspiration directly and in particular were at work at the root. Nor against the background of what we know

of Mauryan relations with Hellenic East and Mauryan court ideology and tradition deeply tinged with Achaemenian ideas were such impetus and inspiration unlikely, especially when we take into account the extent of Achaemenian influence on Asokan epigraphs, his imperial ideal and policy and the conception of the Maurya Pillared Hall referred to above. But the differences that separate the Maurya columns from the Achaemenian ones are also considerable and must not be lost sight of.

The stone columns of the Maurya Pillared Hall were evidently without capitals whereas the columns of the pillared halls of Persepolis are provided with more or less elaborate capitals. Achaemenian columns stand either on bell-shaped bases or on plain rectangular blocks or on plain circular mouldings while independent Mauryan columns have no base at all. The bell-form that is used as supporting base in Persian columns serves as capital in Mauryan ones and makes altogether a different aesthetic effect; moreover, in form, shape and appearance the Mauryan bell, which along with the Achaemenian may have originally been derived from stylised lotus design and which may have been a common art-motif in both Indian and Iranian art-heritage, is a long way off from the Achaemenian bell in which a ring of leaves and petals plays an important part in the decoration of the upper end of the motif and which has no bulge whatsoever in the middle that makes the Mauryan bell so gainly and conspicuous. The Achaemenian shaft is fluted in all cases "save in the facades of the necropolis at Persepolis and the single column that still remains of the palace of Cyrus in the upland valley of Powar. In the latter case the anomaly is to be explained by the fact that the building to which the support belonged dates from a time when Persian art had not

constituted itself and was as yet groping to strike out a path of its own. On the contrary, the rock-cut tombs are coeval with the palaces of Darius and Xerxes and if in them the shaft is plain, it was because the vaults stood at a considerable height above ground. To have made them fluted therefore, would have still further reduced the column and divested it of a frank clear aspect when viewed at that distance. To obviate so untoward a contingency the Persian sculptor modified the forms as the Greeks often did in similar cases."⁴¹ Mauryan columns are all plain and circular, but evidently they did not adopt the type from Achaemenian unfluted ones which had for ordinary purposes been discarded by the Achaemenians themselves. A funeral mound at Lauriya-Nandangarh yielded to the excavator's spade a plain and circular piece of a column carved out of śāla wood; such columns are in our literature known as 'sthuna', and the 'primitive' animal standards were evidently comprised of such sthuna columns.⁴² It is not unlikely that the Mauryan shaft was derived from such wooden originals. Indeed, early Buddhist literature speaks often of wooden pillars standing independently by themselves on public thoroughfares. Prof. Barua thinks that "the idea of setting up pillars on public roads (*samsaraṇasi*) might have been suggested by 'indrakīla' (Pāli, *indakhila*) which, according to the Pāli scholiast, was a city-gate pillar made of durable wood (*sāradāru mayatthambha*)... The art of fashioning them with ornamentation, the capital and the abacus must have been the prevalent art of constructing the pillars of a pillared verandah or hall of a royal court" ('*Aśoka and his Inscriptions*', I, chap. IX). The above assumption derives further support from the fact that Achaemenian shafts are indeed built of separate pieces or segments of stone and evidently presents the essential character of the work of a mason, while the Mauryan shaft is one piece which partakes

of the character of the work of a wood-carver or carpenter. The Achaemenian capitals crowned with a cluster of stylised palm-leaves after old Egyptian manner, and formed either of two semi-bulls or unicorns or lions seated back to back, or of an upright or inverted cup, and the whole crowned with projecting double volutes, have nothing whatsoever in common with the Mauryan capitals which consist as we have seen of simply a bell-formed of stylised lotus-petals. The crowning abacus and the round and independent animal motif of Mauryan columns are also altogether absent in Achaemenian examples.

The result achieved by this almost 'thorough transformation' is altogether different. The Achaemenian column intended invariably as part of larger architectural conception is composed of much too many component parts presenting harsh contrasts and looking complex and complicated, while the Mauryan column intended to produce the effect of an independent monument, at least in its latest and best specimens, is simpler, more harmonious in conception and execution, and gives the feeling of more stability, dignity and strength, born perhaps of other primitive and elemental origins. The indigenous and original contribution to the creation of this item of Mauryan art is therefore undeniable. Equally undeniable is also the fact that in their lustrous varnish, in their adoption and adaptation of the bell-shaped capital, in the higher plane of conception and driving idea and in the general monumental and dignified quality and appearance, the Mauryan columns seem to reveal the debt they owe to Achaemenian art, also to Hellenistic art so far as some of the crowning members of the columns and part of the general effect are concerned. The twisted rope design, the bead-reel-cable design etc. to mark the transitions, the acanthus leaf

and palmette designs etc. to decorate the abacus may have however been derived from the older and common West-Asiatic art-heritage.

IV

MAURYAN ANIMAL FIGURES

The almost life-size animal sculptures that crown the Mauryan columns along with the elephant at Dhauli in Orissa may conveniently be studied separately. Here too, as in the case of the columns, a rough chronological sequence of the stages of striving after the desired effect can well be traced. The Basarh-Bakhira lion evidently marks one of the earliest stages. The next definite stage is reached at Dhauli where the elephant but half emerges from live rock and which is dateable in the twelfth or thirteenth year of Aśoka's reign. To this stage must also be ascribed the elephant of Sāṅkāśya. The Rampurva bull marks the next stage in the ascending scale closely followed by the Lauriya-Nandangarh lion, while the Rampurva lion leads us to the final stage represented by the quadripartite semi-lions of Sarnath and Sanchi; in both instances there is an unmistakable evidence of clever accumulation that usually comes at a later stage of the evolution of form.

The Basarh-Bakhira lion is clumsy in form and appearance and crude in execution. The feeling for linear rhythm is evident in the flowing line gliding downwards from the top of the head, but ends abruptly at the hard line of the slab where the tail turns inwards. The manes are already highly stylised and locks are treated in separate volumes clumsily arranged. The facial expression is quaint and primitive and the entire attitude lacks

dignity. The volume of the lion's body has undoubtedly been fully visualised and reproduced, but the essential plastic sense has not yet matured. The living body is hardly moved by any energy or vigour that is within; it exists only by the weight of its volume.

Compared to this the Dhauli elephant shows a much more developed sense of form and is artistically far superior than its Sāṅkāśya cousin. Indeed such plastic presentation of bulky volume, such feeling for living flesh rendered with remarkable realism, such knowledge of the physiognomical form of the subject treated, such sense of dignified movement and linear rhythm has no parallel in Mauryan animal sculptures. Compared to this even the Rampurva lion or the Sarnath quadripartite with their tight and coagulated treatment of the veins and muscles shown in meaningless tension and in spite of full reproduction of volume and advanced proof of visualisation, appear lifeless. The loud exhibitionism of pomp and power of the Rampurva or Sarnath specimens has nothing to compare with the quiet dignity of the Dhauli elephant. With its right front leg slightly tilted and the left bent straight in short angle exhibiting a slight forward motion, and with its heavy trunk flowing rhythmically in a delightful curve it walks majestically out of a deep ravine as it were. It indeed symbolises His Imperial Majesty King Aśoka presenting himself with quiet dignity before the people of Kalinga. The Sarnath quadripartite is on the other hand an exhibition of imperial pomp, power and authority before the Buddhist monks of Sarnath who had chosen the site of the "First Turning of the Wheel" as their place for quiet pursuit of the religion of Śākyamuni. Compared to the Dhauli elephant the Sarnath quadripartite and its Sanchi counterpart are bombastic in style and motive.

The Sāṅkāśya elephant is on a lower level of artistic conception. In spite of an appearance of movement the huge and plumpy animal is, plastically speaking, comparatively static, though there is some evidence of movement in the modelling of the muscles and of the volume of live flesh of the hind portion and the legs. The front legs are however treated pillar-like though the intended effect was presumably one of tension, since the animal appears to shrink backwards with the body-weight pressed in that direction. This attitude of the body, by the way, fails to harmonise with the abacus and the capital below. From Dhauli to Sāṅkāśya there is a steady direction, it seems, towards a stylised treatment of the plastic volume, of muscles and body-flesh. This is evident in the treatment of the upper but more in the lower portion of the chest and abdomen of the Sāṅkāśya elephant, but nowhere increasingly more and more than in the lion figures.

Compared to the Basarh-Bakhira lion, the Lauriya-Nandangarh example is more tense and tight without doubt; the surface treatment is also more clear and precise. On the whole the stylisation of the treatment of the veins, muscles and the flesh is on the increase; both form and treatment tend to be more conventional. In visualisation and realistic presentation of volume there is however hardly any advance, nor is there any attempt to harmonise the animal form with the component parts of the column below.

From the Lauriya-Nandangarh specimen to the Rampurva lion there is a decided advance in the clear and precise cutting of the stone, in general finish, in the feeling for form and in linear rhythm. There is also an evident advance in modelling which is powerful and vigorous, specially in the muscles and thews, but the entire artistic conception is conventional and

treatment stylised which is nowhere more evident than in the schematic treatment of the manes and the almost lifeless and conventional presentation of the legs and paws. Yet, compared to the Sarnath quadripartite the Rampurva lion as a piece of independent sculpture may be considered artistically superior, though the former, architectonically speaking, is more advanced, since nowhere else in the Mauryan columns a better and more efficient harmony with the abacus and the capital has been achieved.

The Rampurva bull is architectonically less advanced than the lion from the same place since "it fails to harmonise with the capital on which it stands."⁴³ Marshall argues that it is not "so well-executed as the (Rampurva) lion"; if he means that it is not as tense and tight in formal appearance or does not show as conventionally powerful and modelled treatment or stylisation of form he is undoubtedly correct. But at the same time it has to be recognised that the artist responsible for this piece of sculpture had a remarkable sense of form as well as of plastic volume and of the quality of the flesh. Here is indeed realistic vision and close observation of nature and full understanding of the character of the object; nothing stylised or conventional or abstract has blurred the mental image of the artist or stood in the way of his execution. The animal is supposed to stand with its full weight on earth in quiet and restrained dignity, and the artist has rendered that idea with remarkable clarity and perfect realism. Here too the modelling is vigorous but not conventional, plastic and linear sense fully mature but not schematised; the energy and vitality that are within express themselves in restrained but powerful dignity; a dynamic naturalism gives it potency and strength, which I consider to be a certain legacy of the art of the bulls of the pre-historic Indus Valley.

A comparison with the vigorously striding bull on the abacus of the Sarnath column is at once suggested. Here the bull is rendered with all the tension and accentuation of muscles, of veins and bones that a vigorous movement brings into play; the sense of linear rhythm and plasticity of volume are also fully in evidence; the execution is also clear and precise. But it is at the same time hard to deny that the entire treatment is conventional inasmuch as the muscles are unduly exaggerated, the tension in movement ever-emphasised and the modelling coagulated. A different aesthetic vision and tradition are indeed at work here.

The Sarnath quadripartite is architectonically on a most superior level and must be admitted to be a very successful solution of a problem the Maurya artists grappled with from the very beginning. Of all Maurya sculptures it is the most well-known, most highly spoken of and reproduced on most occasions. Marshall is justified in saying that "the Sarnath capital, though by no means a masterpiece, is the product of the most developed art of which the world was cognisant in the third century B. C. —the handiwork of one who had generations of artistic effort and experience behind him. In the masterful strength of the crowning lions, with their swelling veins and tense muscular development, and in the spirited realism of the reliefs below, there is no trace of primitive art. So far as naturalism was his aim, the sculptor modelled his figures direct from nature, and has delineated their forms with bold, faithful touch...Equally mature is the technique of his relief work." "But at the same time it must not be lost sight of that the entire conception and execution are conventional from beginning to end. Compositionally the accumulation of form of the four semi-lions is schematic, though from consideration of technique clever and efficient. The

veins and muscles are over emphasised, and with all their seeming tenseness and bold delineation appear lifeless and conventional. The heads with gaping mouths and curved moustaches treated conventionally are more decorative and ornamental than endowed with life; the same is true of the manes treated conventionally and arranged schematically. The extravagance of form saps the life out of the object that it represents, though from the point of view of technique the art is fully developed and civilised and its appearance conscious and sophisticated.

The animal reliefs on the abacus are all worked almost in the round showing deep contrast of light and shade. Technically therefore they are far in advance to that row of pecking geese that decorates the Rampurva lion abacus though the latter is very realistically treated and imparts a sense of movement that comes from life itself. One of the four animals of the Sarnath abacus is that of a galloping horse very spirited in movement; its modelling and treatment of plastic volume partake of the same conventional attitude and execution as those of the lions discussed above. This is equally applicable to the two other animals on the abacus, namely, the vigorously striding lion and the humped Indian bull, the forms and types in each case having been already fixed by convention. The only animal on the abacus that is treated in a different manner and viewed from a different attitude is the elephant slowly striding forward. It is much less conventional and the modelling shows a more realistic feeling for plasticity of volume, though the form has been but inadequately realised. Compared to the Dhauili elephant the elephant of the Sarnath abacus looks like an wooden toy.

The Sanchi counterpart of Sarnath belongs to the same style and is equally conventional and stylised. The manes of the lions are rendered with increasing schematisation which is

perhaps an indication of a date later than that of Sarnath. Architectonically it conforms to the solution already achieved at the latter place, but the Sanchi abacus which is decorated like the Rampurva lion capital with a row of pecking geese done in higher and bolder relief is narrower than the Sarnath one, and is aesthetically more in harmony with the capital below and the crowning lions above.

It is somewhat curious that the lions in Mauryan art are always and invariably done in a manner that seems already to have been fixed by convention. Their formal pose and appearance, the rendering of their volume, bold and vigorous but stylised treatment, their plastic conception and the sense of form as revealed in them are on the whole the same and pre-determined. The trend of the style is already evident in the Basarh-Bakhira lion and it is within the limit of the given trend that the style evolves, and advances in treatment and execution. The aesthetic vision and imagination, the attitude and outlook of the artist do not show any definite change. This is partly true as well of the lion, the horse and the bull on the Sarnath abacus. It raises the presumption that this style and convention came from outside where they had been already fixed and well-established. The horse on the Sarnath abacus in its movement and modelling recalls the two horses in the relief on the Sacrophagus of the Amazons;⁴⁵ the vigorously striding lion and the bull both recall well-known Achaemenian prototypes of the same style and convention.⁴⁶ Even the elephant on the abacus has a distant kinship with the horned elephants on the early coins of the Seleucids, though the Sarnath elephant is much less conventional and shows somewhat a different sense of form and treatment.

The aesthetic vision and imagination and the conventional style and fixed expression just spoken of are most evident in the

crowning lions. Compared with later figural sculptures in the round, of Yakshas and their female counterparts or the reliefs of Barhut, Sanchi and Bodhgaya, the art represented by the crowning lions belongs to an altogether different world of conception and execution, of style and technique, altogether much more complex, urban and civilised. They have nothing archaic or primitive about them, and the presumption is irresistible that the impetus and inspiration of this art must have come from outside. Did it come from the Achaemenian West? This seems to be very doubtful, for the modelling of these sculptures have nothing in common with Medo-Achaemenian sculptures, nor the powerful feeling for volume and preference for stagnant compact forms have anything in common with Medo-Achaemenian Iran. Moreover West-Asiatic art, especially Iranian art during the Achaemenian period came heavily under the influence of Hellenistic art; further, "the few attempts made in Iran in the domain of free plastic art bear an entirely different stamp in their preference for angular forms."⁴⁷ Marshall therefore argued for Hellenistic plastic tradition as practised by Graeco-Bactrian artists. From what we know of the Hellenistic colonies in West-Asia and the part they played in Mauryan India, it is possible, nay highly probable, that Hellenistic art and culture played also a very dominant role in Mauryan art. The Maurya lions, indeed, in their aesthetic conception and plastic vision, in their conventional modelling and advanced visualisation, in their feeling for volume and sense of form invariably recall conventional and decadent colonial Greek works of the same art-form and design. Here then we can trace the source of the impetus and inspiration of the conventional art of the crowning lions of Mauryan columns. Here then, in a tradition familiar with lions and bulls and horses was the convention fixed and determined.

It may be argued that the art-form and tradition as revealed in the Mauryan lions represent the stage of exhaustion of the art of the Indus Valley in the natural process of dissipation of the art-form that we have evidence of in the seals of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro. I am not altogether certain about it, not because the art of the Indus Valley remains chronologically unrelated and unexplained, but because the two arts belong to different aesthetic visions and imaginations. The dynamic naturalism that interprets the pent up energy of the Indus Valley animals has nothing to connect itself with the stagnant compactness of treatment of the Asokan lions. While life flows in sinuous rhythm in one, it stands still in meaningless tension in another; indeed, the two seem to belong to two different worlds of vision and imagination.

The Dhauli elephant and perhaps the Rampurva bull seem to belong to a somewhat different aesthetic vision and outlook, perhaps to a different art tradition other than that of the lions. True, indeed, so far as feeling for volume and its reproduction are concerned they belong to the same fully developed stage of art as that of the crowning lions discussed above, and that there is nothing archaic and primitive about them; but it is equally true there is nothing conventional about them as well, and the plastic sense and method of treatment are altogether different. The fluidity of the modelling betrays a full knowledge of the softness of the flesh and of the flowing current of life that is within; it is also restrained and is not contaminated by any conventional exaggeration or localised emphasis. Nor is there any evidence of schematisation of form. Indeed, these two examples (with perhaps the Sānkāśya elephant as a close third) represent a different aesthetic outlook and a different art tradition than those of the crowning lions and the lion, horse and bull

reliefs on the Sarnath abacus. This difference in outlook and tradition is clearly brought to the fore when the Rampurva bull is compared with the relief of the same animal in the Sarnath column ; the two bulls belong to two different worlds as it were. It is, I think, permissible to assume that it is Indian aesthetic vision and imagination and Indian art tradition that are here largely at work, so far as art style at least is concerned. The same plastic conception and quality of modelling constitute the pivot round which early Indian art moves, and the same restraint and quiet dignity are the qualities that Indian art ever sought to achieve in higher art from the very beginning. Moreover, if the Dhauli and Sāṅkāśya elephants, particularly the former, are compared with the figures of elephants in bold and high relief in the frieze of the facade of the Lomaśa Rishi cave, it will at once be seen that they belong to the same style and tradition of art. This cave, even if not of Mauryan date, can not be very much later ; all scholars recognise that the entire facade of this cave is the exact and literal translation in stone of a wooden prototype. It may be assumed therefore that figures of elephants in the same style and tradition as we see them on the stone facade were already being rendered in wood for generations when they came to be transferred on stone. It is not unlikely that in the Dhauli elephant, the Rampurva bull and partly in the Sāṅkāśya elephant, all of which are decidedly Indian in appearance and spirit, we but witness the traditional Indian conception of these objects and the older or contemporary Indian art style and tradition transferred into stone in terms of the requirements of that particular material and according to the dictates of bolder designs and bigger dimensions. Indeed, the Dhauli elephant and the Rampurva bull are both characterised by a lively naturalism and a plastic treatment of volume that are unlike those of the

Mauryan lions or of the animals on the abacus of the Sarnath capital. But they cannot, I am afraid, be said to represent the stage of exhaustion of the art of the Indus Valley ; rather their fresh energy and dignified bearing bespeak a new and fresh consciousness of life. I am, therefore, disposed to hold that the conventional art-form as represented by the lions is of foreign extraction, and from what we know of the phil-Hellenism of the Maurya court on the one hand and the art-form of the Hellenistic Orient on the other, there cannot be any reasonable doubt that it was imported from West-Asia which happened to be the play ground of Medo-Achaemenian and Hellenistic culture-complex. The art-form represented by the Dhauli elephant and the Rampurva bull stand on a different footing altogether ; it is perhaps the indigenous art tradition practised in wood, presumably through centuries, an art tradition to which the art of the Indus Valley may have bequeathed but distant memories. To such plastic practices in wood and other materials we have references in the 'Arthaśāstra', the 'Manusmṛiti', the 'Ashtādhyāyī' of Pāṇini, and in certain early Buddhist texts (Barua, JISOA, XI, pp. 65-68). Thus, there must have existed in pre-Mauryan India an art of wood-carving and clay-modelling that carved and modelled free and round figures of men and animals out of wood and clay, and perhaps also of big dimensions.

It is difficult to say anything about the nationality of the artists of the Maurya court ; there is no evidence on the point. But from what has been said above, it is permissible to assume that the Dhauli elephant, the Rampurva bull and perhaps also the Sāñkāśya elephant are works of Indian artists working in contemporary Indian style and tradition, and having a thorough mastery of the third dimension and a full consciousness of the Indian outlook. The crowning lions of the early

phases, namely, the Basarh-Bakhira and Lauriya-Nandangarh examples, are also works of Indian artists but tutored in the style and tradition of contemporary western art; this is marked in the grappling with the problem of form and its precise execution so evident in these sculptures. There is decided advance in the Rampurva, Sarnath and Sanchi specimens; this may have been achieved by the same Indian artists working increasingly in the direction of contemporary West-Asiatic art, or by colonial artists of the Hellenistic Orient imported by the Maurya court. In any case, there are in these specimens a strong and undeniable Perso-Hellenistic stamp that may not have been imprinted by traditional Indian hands.

This is not surprising in the least, since the whole of the North-West of India during the centuries of Śaśunāga-Nanda-Maurya domination formed really a part of the Asiatic West and of the international world extending from the coasts of the Mediterranean to the banks of the Indus. It was the art and culture of this world with which the Maurya kings and court had affiliated themselves. The Yonaṣ or Yavanas (evidently derived from Greek Ionian), the Kāmbojas, and the Gandhāras were the typical peoples of this region of India on this side of and beyond the Hindukush, mentioned along with the Kirātas and the Barbaras in the 'Mahābhārata', and with still some more tribes in the 'Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa'. It is significant that Manu describes the Yavanas and the Kāmbojas as Kshatriya tribes who occupied the position of fallen castes of the 'Vrātyas'. Still more significant is that the Pāli 'Assalāyana Sutta' mentions Yona and Kāmboja as peoples who had altogether a different social-organisation "admitting of nothing but a general distinction between the status of a master (ayya, ārya) and that of a slave or servant (dāsa), creating no impassable barrier between the

two, and thereby making it possible for men to pass from one class into another according to opportunities and vicissitudes of life." This kind of social organisation along with the tradition recorded by Buddhaghosha in his 'Papañcha-sūdanī', that the Aparānta janapada was peopled by men who originally came from Aparagoyāna or the Western Continent which was the division of the earth lying to the west of Sumeru and Jambudvīpa and extending as far west as the Western Seas, seems to suggest that these regions of India lay within the orbit of the international world which was during all those centuries dominated by Persian-Hellenistic culture and politics. This is further supported by Buddhaghosha when he says that the Yaunas, Kāmbojas and other allied frontier peoples, all belonged to the Pārasaka-vaṇṇa. The 'Mahābhārata' too brands them all as 'garuṇa Mlechchhajātayaḥ' or dreaded barbarians, while in the 'Bhūridatta Jātaka' the majority of the people of Kāmboja are credited only with barbarous habits and false creed. Nor there can be any doubt, from the combined testimony of Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, that there had existed somewhere on the Kabul river a Persianised Greek settlement even prior to Alexander's invasion of India. The one fact that emerges from all these literary references (Barua, Inscriptions of Aśoka, II, pp. 257-61) is that these regions west of the Indus shared in a common social organisation and a common culture that extended upto the shores of the Mediterranean. Aśoka's role in contemporary Indian history was to bring India into the orbit of this international culture, to raise her from Middle and Eastern Indian tribalism to the internationalism of the contemporary world.

V

ALLEGED MAURYAN SCULPTURES

Besides the animal sculptures described and discussed above, quite a considerable number of independent figure sculptures in the round, and of various sizes and proportions, and a few fragments of reliefs have been ascribed to the Maurya period,⁴⁴ mainly on the ground of their having the so-called Mauryan polish on them and their being carved out of grey sand-stone from Chunar. These are insufficient grounds indeed. The art of giving lustrous polish to the stone the Maurya artists learnt evidently from the Achaemenians, and once they practised it in large scale and made it current, it was only in the nature of things that the practice would continue for some time at least, and in stray instances even when the power and authority of the Maurya court had vanished and Maurya court art that apparently found in this polish an expression of imperial glory and splendour had become a thing of the past. Nor is the argument of a common place of origin so far as the material is concerned more potent. Stone as the material 'par excellence' for sculptural work was a sort of a new learning with the Mauryan court artists, and this material was quarried at Chunar. It was handled for at least a few generations and was found to respond very well to the hammer and chisel of the stone sculptors. It is only likely therefore that later sculptors would continue for some time to have their material imported from the same quarry until they struck at other quarries and found their stone good enough to meet their requirements. It is therefore on the arguments of conception and style that we must take our stand to argue whether they can be labelled as Mauryan or not.

The two Patna Yakshas, almost identical in form and appearance, conception and treatment, and dress and ornament, come first in the list of alleged Mauryan sculptures. It deserves consideration that both the statues have each on the scarf of their shoulder a line of Brāhmī inscription that has paleographically been dated round about the beginning of the Christian era, and that helps to identify the statues as those of Yakshas. No reason is adduced why the statues should not be considered as belonging to the same period as that of the inscriptions. The so-called Mauryan polish on which the main argument for a Mauryan date rests is conspicuous only on the upper half of the bodies, which may be taken to point to the fact that the practice of Maurya court art was already on the wane. While there is nothing peculiarly Mauryan about this couple, there are elements that seem to connect them with some sculptures on the eastern gate of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi on the one hand and the 'primitive' Kushāṇa school of Mathura on the other. The heaviness, the almost archaic stolidity and weighty volume, the conflict between fully rounded and modelled volume as seen in the arms, breast and abdomen on the one hand and flat surface at the back on the other seem to suggest that they have a close affinity with the huge, heavy and 'primitive' Bodhisatvas of the Mathura school. The treatment of the garment when it does not cling to the body, as volumes separate from the body is a particular characteristic of the Kushāṇa school of Mathura; when, however, it clings to the body it is treated as a wet cloth and is almost invisible but for the parallel ridges that indicate the folds. A similar treatment of the garment characterises the Didarganj Yakshī also, to be considered later. On the other hand so far as general shape and appearance of the upper part of the body and the quality and

character of the modelling are concerned, a kinship with the art of the bigger reliefs on the eastern gate of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi seems to be admissible.

Much less known than either the Patna Yakshas or the two other colossal standing statues of polished sand-stone from Parkham and Didarganj are two torsos of naked Jaina images, both recovered from Lohanipur near Bankipur, Patna, and now in the Patna Museum. The larger torso, a free and round sculpture carved out of Chunar sand-stone, has the high Maurya polish on it, while the smaller one, identical in appearance and style and of the same material, has no polish. They have both been found together on the same level under-ground along with a silver punch-marked coin which Jayaswal says 'precedes Maurya coinage.' He ascribes the larger torso to the Maurya period and the unpolished smaller one to the 'Śuṅga or later', on which grounds he does not state.⁴⁹ If one is to go by style and appearance both the torsos must belong to the same period which may not be far out of date from the Patna Yakshas on the one hand and the Parkham Yakshas on the other. In their tight and stiff modelling, in their fully rounded arms and thighs and in their general earthy heaviness of form they have a kinship with the Patna statues; both pairs are characterised by a smooth and lifeless inertia, and by a comparatively flat surface treatment of their backs. The Lohanipur statues, moreover, are more primitive and archaic in outlook and appearance, heavy, and a little bit unbalanced in proportion, which seem to link them with the Baroda and Parkham Yakshas.

The same conflict in a rather accentuated form of fully rounded volume and flat surface, the same complex relation of ornaments and garments to the body, the same heaviness and archaism, rigidity and lifeless smoothness, characterise what

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remains of the colossal sand-stone statue of a Yaksha⁵⁰ recovered from Baroda near Parkham and another slightly smaller but comparatively well-preserved Yaksha statue from Parkham itself (both now in the Mathura Museum), the latter having the same polish as that of the Maurya columns. There can be no doubt that in all these statues we have a clear expression of the weighty and imposing earthiness that traditional Indian imagination connects with its Yakshas and Yakshinis, gods and goddesses of material plenty and physical welfare. The lightly bent knees and the comparatively thin legs of the standing Parkham figure have some kinship with those of the Manibhadra Yaksha statue from Pawaya near Gwalior⁵¹, while the frank and 'unconditional frontality' of both Baroda and Parkham statues, attaching little or no importance to the back, reminds one of 'primitive' Bodhisattvas of the Mathura school. Compared to the Patna Yakshas the Parkham specimen is more stiff and archaic in appearance, more rough and crude in execution; but in the relation of ornament and dress with the body and in the quality of the tight and stiff modelling it betrays the same essential characteristics. In its upper part it shows no doubt a tendency towards flattened surface treatment, but in the lower half fully rounded and powerfully modelled mass is in full evidence giving the legs a lively form and appearance in strong contrast to the torso with a protruding and deformed abdomen which is possibly an individual characteristic. The flowing drapery which is treated as transparent where it clings to the body and as separate though in thin and flat volumes where it is gathered together, is indicated at the front by incised wave lines (as in Barhut) and at the ends by a single rounded ridge. It seems that such treatment of drapery as we see in the Parkham image can in no way be dated earlier than Barhut, and similar shape and modelled form of the

legs cannot be earlier than the first century B.C. In any case the Baroda and Parkham statues constitute what we may call the earliest Mathura primitives and the initial chapter of the Mathura school of sculpture. They have hardly anything to connect themselves with Mauryan sculpture of known date and locality, and are perhaps later than even the Patna Yakshas discussed above.

Artistically the Didarganj Yakshinī is the best of the series, and can in no way be considered as archaic or primitive. In the easy and slight stoop and forward movement of the upper part of the body helped by a slight bend of the right knee-joint, the narrow waist and full round breasts with the necklace hanging rhythmically along and between the breast-lines, the broad hips, the shapely legs gradually tapering down to the thin ankles decorated by heavy and fully jewelled ornaments, the style of doing and decorating the hair, and not the least, in the sensitiveness of flesh as revealed in what remains of the modelling of the abdomen, the chin and the region round the eyes, one witnesses perhaps an earliest urban, conscious and sophisticated female type and form immortalised in later Indian art and literature. The fact that the treatment of its ornaments and drapery, especially that of the latter, is the same as that of the Patna Yakshas is no reason why it should be labelled as 'primitive' or considered as belonging to the same period or phase of early Indian art. The statue, plastically fully round, is bound by no law of frontality and is meant to be seen from all sides; it has no primitivity whatsoever about it. Its heavy but loose mass of hair, its full soft bosoms and the firmness of the flesh at the back, its attenuated waist with soft abdominal muscles and the broad hips at once recall the still daintier and more lively Yakshinīs of the Mathura reliefs of the second century A. D., which are characterised by fully round and lively modelling of their limbs, scarfs and anklets.

Indeed, the Didarganj Yakshinī cannot be very much earlier than the latter, inspite of its so-called Mauryan polish or its material.

These life size, plastically round statues belong thus to different aspects and phases of Indian art. They are all Indian in form and appearance, in style and treatment, and they have hardly any relation with the court art of the Mauryas. The third dimension was already mastered by the courtly Indian tradition, in the Dhauḷi elephant and the Rampurva bull, for example, so that the conception and execution of either the Didarganj Yakshinī or perhaps those of the Patna Yakshas to an extent presented them with no new problem. Indeed, they belong to the same line of evolution, but at later stages, reflecting on themselves the currents of the flowing tradition and fashions of contemporary practice. The Baroda and Parkham statues along with a seated Yakshinī (now in worship as Manasādevī) from Mathura⁵² on the other hand belong to a different conception and tradition altogether, perhaps to a folk tradition, much older and born of the seeds of the soil, that was current and co-existent with the Maurya court art but of which the latter knew nothing. The fixation of that art in permanent materials is first to be seen at Barhut and later in various other places where it slowly and steadily grappled, stage by stage and with varying measure of success, with the problem of the third dimension that connotes fuller visualisation and comprehension of cubic values and also figuration of round and independent volumes. The Baroda and Parkham statues along with others of still later date represent the different stages in that direction.

A few male heads and small fragments of heads of the same material and similarly polished, all from Sarnath, are usually assigned to the Maurya period, since they are carved out of Chunar sand-stone and have the so-called Mauryan

polish on them. It is very likely, as Coomaraswamy surmises on the ground of their "extraordinary actuality" and "marked individuality", that these are "parts of portrait figures, and presumably portraits of donors." Their head-dress consisting of either a fillet with a laurel wreath or a mural crown is certainly reminiscent of Hellenistic motifs. Similar fragments of stone heads with identical head-dresses hail also from Bhita and Mathura which along with the Sarnath examples constitute a 'well-marked stylistic group,' but there is nothing to connect them definitely with Mauryan art. All that they, together with some terracotta heads and figures from Mathura, Sarnath, Basarn, Bulandibagh, Kumrahar and other places, with Greek motifs on their head-dress and occasionally even with foreign facial types, prove is that Greek motifs and types along with Hellenistic provincial art had migrated to as far east as the Ganges valley.⁵³ Since Hellenistic contacts were potent and effective even after the fall of the Mauryas, migration and adoption of Hellenistic art-forms and motifs at later periods of history can not be ruled altogether out of consideration.

A few other fragmentary reliefs have also been assigned to the Mauryan period, again without sufficient reason. An intensely lyrical and qualitatively of very subtle significance is the figure of a young sorrowing lady worked in high relief out of the fragment of an arch.⁵⁴ The soft and delicate modelling of the nude upper part, nowhere so sensitively rendered as in the back and in the fresh young breasts, the soft linear rhythm and the compositional unity have no parallel in early Indian art. Indeed, its plastic and linear expressiveness does not fit in against the background of either Maurya or Śunga art. The style and treatment of the hair, ornaments and garment have indeed a primitive heaviness of form but the modelling and linear composition are very much

in advance. Another relief from Bhita⁵⁴ also shows decided advance in general appearance, pose and movement, and from the character of relief composition, facial type and surface treatment it can not be dated earlier than Bodhgaya and Sanchi.

A considerable number of terracottas said to have been recovered from "the lowest, or nearly the lowest, levels at several widely separated sites extending from Pāṭalīputra to Taxila"⁵⁵ have occasionally been assigned to the Maurya period, mainly on grounds of style and appearance. Kramrisch and Gordon have drawn pointed attention to the hazards of trying to date terracottas, moulded or modelled, on ground of style or on that of appearance.⁵⁷ Moreover, excavation methods till very lately pursued in India have not unfortunately been such as to make level or stratification a dependable argument for determining chronological sequence, so far as terracottas at least are concerned. Most terracotta pieces, except perhaps a few from the ancient site of Pāṭalīputra, that had originally been labelled Mauryan are now being ascribed to the Śuṅga, Kushāṇa and even early Gupta periods.⁵⁸

VI

MAURYAN CAVES

Of the architectural remains usually ascribed to the Maurya period very few are artistically significant. Tradition ascribes a large number of 'stūpas' and 'chaitya' halls to the building activities of Aśoka, but none of them exists to-day in their original form and plan except the excavated 'chaitya' halls bearing inscriptions of Aśoka and Daśaratha, in the Barabar-Nagarjuni group of

caves. The monolithic rail at Sarnath in grey and polished Chunar sand-stone may have been erected under the direction and patronage of Aśoka himself. Its architectural form is exactly that of the rails of Barhut, and must have been literally transferred into stone from contemporary wooden originals without possibly any understanding of its constructional characteristics. The plinth or the 'ālambana', the uprights or the 'stambhas', the horizontal bars or the 'sūchis' and the copings or the 'ushnīshas' have all been carved out of what must have been one huge slab of stone; an understanding of the constructional characteristics would have certainly made the task easier by piecing together the constituent parts of smaller slabs of stone, exactly in the same way as we see them done at Barhut, Sanchi and Bodhgaya. The altar or the 'bodhimaṇḍa' at Bodhgaya is also traditionally associated with Aśoka. It is permissible to assume that it was perhaps much like the 'bodhimaṇḍa' as we see it in one of the Barhut reliefs,⁶⁰ inscribed in Brāhmī characters "Bhagavato Sākya Muṇino Bodho." The point of architectural interest is that the Barhut altar consists of four pilasters, forms of which were evidently derived from wooden prototypes and had nothing to do with the monumental Asokan columns.

The Barabar and Nagarjuni caves of which the Sudāmā seems to be the earliest are lineal descendants of similar rock-hewn caves of rude primitive tribes and recluses. They are the earliest examples of the rock-cut method and are exact translations in stone of existing wood and thatch constructions. The interior walls and roofs of these simple cells, including that of the Lomaśa Rishi cave of the same Barabar-Nagarjuni series have all received the high polish so typical of Mauryan art. The earliest of these caves is presumably the one bearing an inscription dated in the twelfth year of Aśoka's reign

the Sudāmā—and saying that it was dedicated to the monks of the Ājīvika sect. This rock-hewn cave consists of two chambers; a rectangular ante-chamber with barrel-vaulted roof and a doorway with sloping jambs, an indication of adoption of earthen prototypes, in the long side of the chamber, at the end of which there is a separate circular cell with a hemispherically domed roof. The two chambers are connected by a central interior doorway. At the outer side the circular cell has an overhanging eave which is but transference in wood of thatch construction; moreover the live rock walls are marked by irregular perpendicular grooves which are but translation in live rock of upright wooden or bamboo planking.⁶⁰

Fergusson states that a second of this series of caves, called the Karna Chaupar, bears an inscription which records the excavation of the cave in the nineteenth year after the coronation of Asoka. It is simply a rectangular hall, and except in an arched roof, has no architectural feature of importance. At the right, or west end is a low platform as if for an image...⁶¹

In the granite Nagarjuni hill there are three more caves, each bearing an inscription of the Maurya king Dasaratha, that purports to dedicate them to the same Ājīvika sect. Two of these are very small, consisting of a simple rectangular cell each, each entered from the end, and having a barrel-vaulted roof. The largest is the one known locally as Gopi or Milk-maid's cave which is a long rectangular hall with a barrel-vaulted roof and with circular ends. It is entered through a doorway in the centre of the south side.⁶²

Chronologically the latest and architecturally the best of the series is undoubtedly the Lomaśa Rishi⁶³ which though bearing no inscription may be taken to belong to the Maurya period. In ground plan and general design it is much like the Sudāmā, and

consists similarly of a rectangular ante-chamber with barrel-vaulted roof and entered by the long side through a doorway with sloping jambs. This ante-chamber is connected at the end through a central doorway with a separate cell which is oval and not round as in the Sudāmā. But the most interesting architectural element in the Lomaśa Rishi is its facade which is frankly an exact translation of the gable end of a wooden structure in the language of stone. The carpenter's handiwork has indeed been copied in stone in every little detail. From this facade can easily be reconstructed what wood-built structural 'chaityas' had been like during this period.⁶⁴ The finial that surmounts the gable of the facade also seems to have been translated from either terracotta original or from wooden translation of terracotta prototypes.

These caves or rock-cut 'chaityas' represent about half a century of building activity, but unlike Mauryan sculpture these almost primitive architectural essays show no process of evolution. From the Sudāmā to the Lomaśa Rishi there is no doubt an elaboration, but the three caves of Daśaratha do not fit in along the line of any supposed or actual evolution. Indeed these caves do not represent, except in their high polish, any conscious attempt towards architectural achievement. The architects of the Maurya court, so far as these caves are concerned, merely copied in stone what they saw before them constructed of wood and bamboo and clay. But the facade of the Lomaśa Rishi proves once for all that even here in these primitive caves there was no slipshod work permitted in the actual cutting of the stone; every little detail is sharply and precisely chiselled. Whatever their architectural quality these rock-cut 'chaitya'-halls represent the earliest extant remains of and perhaps the second stage in the evolution of this type of Indian monuments. The history of

later 'chaitya' architecture is roughly the history of the evolution of the ground-plan and elevation of the Sudāmā and the Lomaśa Rishi.

VII

CHARACTER OF MAURYA ART

With all its urban, conscious and civilised quality, its advanced power of visualisation and full comprehension of the third dimension, Maurya court art constitutes but an episode in the history of Indian art. Kramrisch rightly states the position when she says that "in the organism of Indian art Mauryan sculpture has only marginal importance."⁴⁵ It was indeed a hot house plant reared up by the will, care and patronage of a court heavily under the influence of the contemporary international culture and ideology of the Asiatic West and Mediterranean East. In course of time the glass walls fell to pieces and the plant withered. Maurya court art failed to make any notable permanent contribution to the growth of Indian art except that it directly helped the fixation of the latter in permanent material.

A most important exponent of Maurya court ideology in sculpture is the crowning lion figure which, we have seen, was conditioned by a plastic vision and artistic convention already fixed and determined within a foreign art tradition. They raise the presumption that they for the first time introduced into the realm of Indian art a highly advanced power of visualisation and a fuller comprehension of the problem of the third dimension. But here a counter-hypothesis, I have already pointed out, presents itself. It is permissible to assume that these two qualities of monumental art were not unknown to Indian

artists who used to work in wood and clay and shape images in fully rounded form. The evidences of the 'Arthasāstra', the 'Manusamhitā', the 'Ashtādhyāyī' and certain early Buddhist texts are clear on this point. Moreover, the assumption seems to find strong support not only from the spirit and appearance but also from the general conception, treatment and execution of the Dhauli elephant and the Rampurva bull which undoubtedly belong to a different art tradition. I have tried also to point out that the Patna Yakshas, the Didarganj Yakshini, and the Lohanipur Jaina images to an extent belong to the line of evolution of this tradition, though it must be admitted that the Maurya elephant and the bull belong qualitatively to a higher aesthetic level. This court art does not seem to have taken cognisance of another tradition of art, a more primitive, perhaps folk tradition of presumably some ethnic significance, that was hardly conscious of the third dimension and fully rounded form. This latter tradition came to be fixed in permanent material for the first time in Barhut where already the conflict between round volume and flat surface makes its appearance and gradually shows itself not only in the Baroda and Parkham Yakshas and in the so-called Manasādevī of Parkham still in worship but also in the Patna Yakshas, the Lohanipur images, and some of the huge primitives of the early Mathura school.

No less important exponent of Maurya court art is the independent column standing free in space. The idea and impetus persisted even after the Mauryas, but the form underwent considerable change. It was never adopted as part of any larger architectural entity in which case pillars and pilasters invariably show and evolve other forms directly from wooden prototypes. Already in the first century B. C. the Garuḍa column from Benares raised at the direction and patronage of a colonial Greek

converted to Bhāgavata-Vaiṣṇavism,⁶⁶ shows form and features that are different from those of Asokan columns. The lowest third of the shaft is octagonal terminated by eight half-lotus designs; the middle third is hexagonal which is terminated by an octagonal band, each side of the band being decorated by a stylised full and round lotus design; the upper third is round and is superimposed by a bell-shaped capital that in its shape, form and appearance is related not so much with the Asokan capitals as with the typical Persepolitan ones with a ring of pointed lotus petals at the upper end of the base. The crowning adornment is not that of an animal but consists of a high cube supporting a stylised cluster of palmyra branches which again recall similar motifs in West-Asiatic art. The fact that this column was raised by a colonial Greek probably explains this emphasis on Achaemenian and West-Asiatic motifs, but the fact remains that post-Maurya art and architecture discarded the type and form of columns made current by the Māurya monarchs. This is further supported by the shape and form of pilasters met with at Barhut and derivable from wooden prototypes. True, there are certain pilasters with pronounced Persepolitan forms, but it is clear that they were the handiwork of masons from the Northwest who left their marks in the Kharoshthi script.

In the realm of architecture also Maurya court art failed to make any impress. The Mauryan palaces and the Pillared Hall brought into existence directly by the impetus and inspiration of Achaemenian architectural form and ideal do not seem to have captured the imagination of Indian builders and architects, and there is no evidence in later Indian art to show that such plans and designs were ever adopted. On the other hand the few rock-hewn 'chaitya'-cells patronised by the Maurya monarchs show that they were exactly translated from wooden prototypes. The

evidence of civil and religious architecture furnished by the early Indian reliefs of Barhut, Sanchi, Amaravati and other places also point to that conclusion. Here also the Indian style, form and tradition made itself felt.⁶⁷

It is true, early Indian art knows of certain motifs, patterns and designs made current and popular by Maurya court art—this without any reference to the question of art-style—and that quite a large portion of this repertory of motifs and designs belongs to the art of Asiatic West which was for a time dominated by Achaemenian and later by colonial Greek imperialism; but it would be an error to imagine that "the whole group of motifs of western Asiatic aspect was introduced by Aśoka's Persian craftsmen en-bloc". There can hardly be any doubt that quite a few of such motifs were made current even before the Mauryas, while those that are definitely Hellenistic during and after the Maurya period.

The imperialism of the Maurya monarchs, especially of Aśoka, was a synthesis of Indian, Achaemenian and Hellenistic ideals. It was the expression of an individualistic taste and ideology, not of a collective social will. Aśoka's personal religion, his conception of Dhamma and his policy of Dhammavijaya also reflect the individual ideology and preference of a resolute but intelligent and benevolent autocrat who dominated the Maurya court and administration. Maurya court art also was no exception to this basic and fundamental factor. Nanda-Maurya, particularly Maurya imperialism and Asokan policy of Dhammavijaya drew India out of her primitive local and tribal outlook. Asokan policy in the realm of religion raised Buddhism to the status of an international religion right from the position of a tribal and regional cult. So in the realm of art as well. Individual taste and preference of Maurya monarchs like Chandragupta,

MAURYA AND SUNGA ART

Bindusāra and Aśoka for ideas and objects from Medo-Achaemenian and Hellenistic Orient furnished the impetus and inspiration, and Indian art not only came to be fixed in permanent material but it was raised from the position of handicraft and primitive art to the dignity and status of monumental art. One of the important functions of this art was to impress and overawe the populace with the power and majesty of the mighty rulers. To this function have to be traced the compactness of the animal figures of solid stone with no projecting arms and legs, the most durable design for and at once the most dignified though most conventional appearance of them, and the most imposing stateliness of the columns themselves and of the figures that crown them. Maurya court art is thus individualistic in its essential character and ideology. The main lines of this art, just as the main lines of Aśoka's policy of Dhammavijaya, were chiefly determined by individual will, taste and preference. Both lacked deeper roots in the collective social will, taste and preference, and were therefore destined to have isolated and short lives coeval and co-existent with and within the four limits of the powerful Maurya court. This explains why Maurya court art with all its dignified bearing, monumental appearance and civilised quality forms but a short and isolated chapter of the history of Indian art. Like the columns and the animal figures themselves Maurya court art stands aloof and apart.

VIII

ASOKAN IDEOLOGY AND ŚUNGA BACKGROUND

The understanding of the aesthetic ideology of Mauryan art and its significance may perhaps be further helped by bringing it



into comparison with the art of the Śunga period, chronologically the closest in succession.

A few facts and factors are worth taking into consideration.

It has been contended that the dismemberment of the Maurya empire was brought about by a reaction promoted by the Brāhmaṇas, and the assassination of the last Maurya monarch by Pushyamitra Śunga was but the successful culmination of a revolution fostered and engineered by the Brāhmaṇas.⁶⁶ Equally forcefully has it been argued that the ascription of the dismemberment of the Maurya empire to a hypothetical Brahmanical revolution is without any objective basis in facts.⁶⁷ This is not the place to go into the details of the contention and counter-contention, but I wonder if the main point in the controversy has not often been missed. I have already hinted at the fact that Maurya administration was a highly centralised and bureaucratic one and with its emphasis on a highly efficient espionage system, its monopolistic economic policy and its authoritarian social and religious ideology, it easily lent itself to the despotic will of the monarch on the throne and no less to the coercive and oppressive interference of wicked official agents. The humanism and benevolence of Aśoka were hardly any guarantee against the evils such a centralised and authoritarian government tended to foster. There can be no doubt that the government and its administration weighed heavily on the subjects and they resented it. The 'Divyāvadāna' expressly refers to two open rebellions at Taxila, once during the reign of Bindusāra, and again in the reign of Aśoka, and on both occasions the immediate cause alleged was the tyranny of the wicked ministers.⁷⁰ The evidence of Asokan epigraphs seems to suggest that official administration was widely prevalent and it is not unlikely that there were rebellions at Ujjain and Kalinga as well.⁷¹

But official mal-administration was more a symptom than a cause; the disease lay in the socio-political outlook of Mauryan imperialism and in the administrative machinery which happened to be the outward manifestation of that outlook. The sixteenth century Tibetan Lāmā Tāranātha seems to suggest that Bindusāra had to suppress a general revolt "of the nobles and kings of sixteen towns,"⁷³ while the 'Gārgī Samhitā' refers pointedly to the oppressive rule of some later Maurya monarchs. Śāliśuka, a descendant of Aśoka, was compelled to abdicate the throne in favour of his elder brother on account of the terrible tyranny he used to inflict on his subjects. Indeed, he has been described as an 'adhārmikah' in the guise of a 'dharmavādī'.⁷⁴ The same text has a veiled reference to Aśoka as 'mohātmā' or 'fool' and a sarcastic allusion to his 'dharma-rājya'.⁷⁵ While there is nothing to indicate that royal tyranny and official oppression were in any way directed against the Brāhmaṇas in particular, there is evidence to show that the people in general smarted under both and had hardly any love for the dynasty and its court and administration. The ascription of the term 'asura' to the Mauryas by certain Epic and Puranic authors can not be lightly brushed aside on the ground that the writers were Brahmanical and the Mauryas Buddhists. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that the first two Maurya emperors were Buddhists. It seems rather that much of the veiled hatred and contempt with which later writers view the Mauryas may have been due to their being exponents of a personal culture-ideology that was largely foreign to the people in general, especially of the Madhyadeśa, and of a socio-political outlook dominated by personal will. Maurya art is but one expression of that culture-ideology and of that essentially personal social outlook. Maurya official mal-administration and infliction of personal royal will are also but symptoms of these

two fundamental characteristics. I wonder if the rebellions alluded to in the 'Divyāvadāna' and Asokan epigraphs were not basically due to these causes, and if the Śuṅga *coup d'état* an expression of the smouldering resentment amongst a large section of the people which was seized on by the Maurya official Pushyamitra who happened to be a Brāhmaṇa and acted like an adventurer. In any case the fact remains, as I shall presently try to demonstrate, that the art of the Śuṅga period that chronologically speaking follows closely on the art of the Maurya court and which from the point of view of subject-matter and iconography is Buddhist reflects more of the mind, tradition and culture-ideology of the larger section of the people than Maurya art was capable of. \Indeed, Śuṅga art, formally and spiritually, is practically a negation of all that Maurya art stands for ; they are different in motive and direction, in their form, technique and significance. It is not unlikely therefore that during and after the Mauryas a silent revolution was gradually making itself felt against all that the Mauryas and their court stood for ; but this reaction, it must be remembered, had nothing to do with the Brāhmaṇas as such. If anything, it was from the point of view of Śuṅga art, the assertion of the tribal and primitive elements of a culture against the domination of a dynasty and court largely under the influence of a foreign culture-complex, or more correctly speaking, within the orbit of an international West-Asiatic culture-complex. In politics it took the shape of popular revolts in the provinces against official mal-administration and finally in a military *coup* that supplanted the Maurya court and dynasty in the centre.

Since Maurya art is the product of the imperial court and personal will of Maurya monarchs, it may be worthwhile to turn to what Aśoka says in his remarkable royal edicts in respect of the

social outlook and attitude of the people over which he ruled, for therein may be found the key to Maurya art-ideology. In Rock edict One the mighty monarch commands: "Here (i. e. in the locality of the edict) no sacrifice shall be performed by immolating a living thing whatsoever and no festive gathering held. King Priyadarsin, Beloved of the gods, sees many faults in (such) a gathering. There are, however, certain festive gatherings approved as good by king Priyadarsin...⁷⁰" In Rock Edict Four he continues: "To-day by the practice of piety on the part of King Priyadarsin, Beloved of the gods, the sound of the drum has become the sound of the doctrine; such as could not be (increased) in the past, during many hundred years, by exhibiting to the people the sight of (celestial) mansions, the sight of (celestial) elephants, and host of fiery and similar other celestial forms, has been increased to-day by imparting of instructions in the Law of Piety by King Priyadarsin...⁷⁰" In Rock Edict Nine the king discourses: "There are people who perform various auspicious rites in times of illness, or on occasions of marriage of sons and daughters, or on those of birth of sons, or in setting out on a journey to a distant place,—on this and on (similar) other occasions the people perform various auspicious rites. Here particularly the womenfolk perform many and diverse, minor and meaningless rites. If the auspicious rite is to be performed (it should be noted that) such a rite produces small fruit..."⁷⁷

The prohibition of sacrificial slaughter is perfectly understandable, though there can be no doubt that it was specifically directed against secular Brahmanism. But Aśoka's ordinance in respect of the general prohibition of 'samājas' in spite of his considering some 'samājas' beneficial reveals his attitude towards popular gatherings and social festivities. Almost invariably associated with 'utsava', 'samājas' afforded the opportunity for the display

along with other things, of some of the popular arts, namely 'gīta' or songs, 'nṛitya' or dances and 'vādita' or instrumental music, as we have it in the Hātīgumphā inscription of Khāravela. Indeed, all authorities agree that the 'samāja,' in spite of its objectionable features, was a sort of a national institution; Kauṭilya even enumerates 'utsava', 'samāja' and 'vihāra' as the three important national institutions that a conqueror must respect.⁷⁸ If such is Aśoka's general attitude towards popular gatherings and social festivities his attitude towards popular demonstrations of religion is still more revealing. "Bherighoso aho dhammaghosho" does no longer mean that the reverberation of the war-drums has become the reverberation of Law. Wickramasinghe and Barua have convincingly proved that the entire passage in its context has nothing to suggest that Aśoka turned a pacifist by abandoning all aggressive militarism. Indeed, "the sound of the drum" says Barua, "symbolises the popular religious demonstration, and that of piety, the 'dhammānusathi'. It was by means of moral instructions that Aśoka claims to have obtained results that could not be achieved by the age-old traditional method in the past, during many hundred years. In other words, here Aśoka's intention is to compare and contrast the effects of the two methods, one, the time-honoured method of popular religious demonstrations, and the other, the new method of moral instructions adopted by him."⁷⁹ Amongst the age-old methods of popular religious demonstration were such things as 'vimāna-darsanā haṣṭi-darsanā agikhaṃdhaṇi cha añāni cha divyāni rūpāni' which were showed to the people. A mass of literature has grown round the interpretation of these terms, but all authorities agree that actual presentations or visual representations were made of processions of chariots, elephants, bonfires, illuminations etc. "The main device", again says Barua, "as might be inferred from the Achchharā verses in the

'Samyutta Nikāya' and the prescriptions in the 'Arthaśāstra' was the 'yātrā' or ceremonial procession organised on the pattern of royal processions to the pleasure garden composed of chariots, elephants, horses, ships, palanquins, drummers, singers, dancers, torch-bearers, actual or artificial, portable picture-galleries, and the like." The portable picture-galleries are mentioned as 'charaṇa-chitras' which the Buddha highly speaks of and consisted, according to Buddhaghosha, of pictures of happy and unhappy destinies of men after death with appropriate labels attached to them and shown in portable galleries.⁸⁰ It can be well imagined that these 'charaṇa-chitras' were nothing else than 'lekhyā-chitras' as distinguished from 'lepa-chittas' of Pāli and 'lepya-chitras' of Sanskrit tradition. Indeed, both 'lekhyā-chitras' and 'charaṇa-chitras' are the same as the 'paṭa-chitras' or scroll-paintings of later date, the traditional vehicle of popular Indian religious and cultural education. The passages quoted above if anything show beyond doubt that Aśoka was not in favour of such methods of edification of religion, and adopted a different method altogether. Rock Edict Nine throws further light on his attitude towards the religion and culture of the people. Therein he clearly expresses himself against folk religious rites and practices, the 'vratas' of mediaeval and present day, of evident ethnic and primitive significance.

It is now clear that Aśoka and presumably the later kings of the Maurya dynasty were all averse to popular demonstration and representation of religion as well as of folk socio-religious rites and practices. Without doubting the sincerity of his concern for the welfare of the people or the efficacy of his methods it may reasonably be argued that what he did was to emphasise some of the universal ethical concepts of religion which he sought to inculcate amongst his people by mandates and ordinances, by

the regulation of piety, in his own words, and by persuasion, as he says in Pillar Edict Seven.⁶¹ There is no doubt that his methods precluded any opportunity for the display of the arts of the people ; indeed, abstract ethical concepts can not by themselves offer subjects or ideas for visual representation. Aśoka's ethical ordinances therefore took the shape and form, so far as art is concerned, of monumental pillars of piety, and in the sphere of administration, of the appointment of Dharmamahāmātras and the proclamation of the Law of piety. This he himself makes clear in Pillar Edict Seven. The pillars of piety are therefore nothing else than expressions of his imperial will and might. Aśoka's personal attitude thus clearly explains why we have no continuous narration nor representational scenes of the nature of Barhut in Maurya court art, and why whatever narrative reliefs we have in the latter takes a quality and character that we observe on the Sarnath abacus. The reference to 'vimāna-darsanā', 'hasti-darsanā' etc. and their interpretation in the light of Buddhist and Brahmanical literature, and the use of portable picture-galleries or 'lekhyā' and 'charaṇa'-chitras' clearly suggest that such narration and representation in art were a common and ancient practice. But Maurya art did not take into cognisance this current art tradition of the people or the one practised in wood and other materials for making images of the hieratic pantheon referred to in a number of early Sanskrit and Pāli texts. Indeed, Aśoka preferred representation in art of royal or religious or auspicious symbols, just as he preferred inculcation of ethical concepts, to popular representation of religion. The elephants, 'white' or the 'best' or the 'all white, the procurer of happiness of all world', or the lions or bulls that crown the monumental pillars may in the light of Buddhist texts and tradition be reasonably interpreted as mere suggestions or symbols of either the

Buddha or the Śākyasiṃha, or of auspicious signs, or of guardians of human destiny.

Curiously enough Śunga art that immediately follows the art of the Mauryas is clearly a negation of the Maurya attitude. The reliefs of Barhut provide more than anything else an illuminating commentary on contemporary Indian life and attitude towards life as conceived and planned in early Buddhism. From this scheme 'samājas' or festive gatherings were not excluded; indeed, there are scenes in which dancing, singing and instrumental music are presented in all their 'ravishing joviality' in which all the elemental forces, all kinds of life and all classes of beings participate and lend their forms to them. The lower bas-relief of the outer face of the Prasenajit pillar, for example, has a scene with the inscription "Sādika-saṃmadam turam devānam—the jovial ravishing music of the gods, gay with dramatic acting," and illustrating the dances of four heavenly dancers Alambushā, Mīśrakeśī, Padmāvati and Subhadrā. All of them, according to Puranic classification, belong to 'laukiki' or anthropomorphic class and to 'mauneya' i.e. representing a class of temptress of the saintly ascetics. Indeed, the Alambushā Jātaka gives an alluring description of the beauty, charm and position of the achharā or apsarā Alambushā; she is said to have been selected from among two and half crores of heavenly courtesans as one capable of testing the virtue of the great ascetic vow.²³ But this is only one of many such scenes of festive gatherings including that of the Chudamaha festival. Nor were ceremonial religious processions as a method of popular religious education abandoned. The reliefs of Barhut portray many such popular demonstrations of religion in which chariots, elephants, horses, luminous celestial sights etc, find their proper place. Indeed, one can not help thinking that such demonstra-

tions showing actual or artificial representation of 'vimānas', 'hastis', 'agikhamdhas' and other 'divya rūpas' etc. were actually practised for the edification of the people, which is very usual in all popular anthropomorphic religions. One of the medallion-carvings of Barhut depicts the Bodhi tree of "Bhagavato Vipasino"; according to Buddhaghosha's description, one reads in the story, of luminous celestial groves like Chitralatā, Nandana etc. which were sighted by the people.⁸³ Another scene depicts the story of the flight of five ṛishis during the Śākya plough festival. According to the 'Lalitavistara' the sudden arrest of the progress of the ascetics in flight was due to the overpowering majesty, of the Bodhisattva in the forest grove beneath. The story relates that the Bodhisattva appeared to the ascetics as a luminary shining with light emitting from his body, and to Suddhodana, as a fire issuing from a mountain peak and glorious like a lamp.⁸⁴ These fires and luminous celestial forms are nothing but the 'agikhamdhāni' and the 'divyāni rūpāni' of the Asokan edict. I am even inclined to think that the various miracles of the Buddha portrayed in the reliefs are also nothing but celestial forms referred to by the Mauryan monarch and which he was so much averse to. [We have seen above that popular religious demonstrations included the exhibition of 'charaṇa-chitras' or portable picture-galleries and that the 'charaṇa-chitras', according to Buddhaghosha, were pictures of happy and unhappy destinies of men after death with appropriate labels attached to them. I would consider that the reliefs of Barhut whether in rectangular panels or in medallions are nothing but 'charaṇa-chitras', with appropriate labels, translated into stone, and hence not portable. And, is it contrary to facts to suggest that the Jātaka scenes depicted are nothing but lively pictorial records of the happy and unhappy destinies of men after death? Besides, the method of

the arrangement of the various scenes depicted on the upright pillars and posts of the gates and the railings, i.e. their general lay-out in square or rectangular panels, one below the other, in more or less continuous narration, can not but invariably suggest similar arrangement of scenes in 'charaṇa-chitras' or 'paṭa-chitras' of later folk pictorial tradition. One may go still further and argue that the top horizontal panels of the gate with their sides rolled up at the two ends are nothing but adaptations in stone of 'paṭa-chitras' spread out for exhibition with their sides rolled up. It may therefore be safely assumed that such horizontal and vertical panel arrangement of scenes in continuous narration at Barhut and later on at Bodhgaya, Sanchi and elsewhere was directly adopted from scroll-paintings of popular and tribal tradition. It is thus clear that Śunga religious and cultural ideology as evidenced in the sculptures of Barhut was unlike that of Aśoka ; indeed it was more popular in character and more collective in its aim and origin.)

It is well known that primitive Buddhism incorporated a large portion of the faiths, beliefs and practices of the un-aryan aboriginal tribes of the Madyadeśa and Eastern India. Elements of totemistic, animistic and shamanistic beliefs and practices can be traced from the worship of the Bodhi trees of the seven Buddhas to the worship of heroes and of funerary mounds, from the cult of the 'nāga' or serpent to that of the 'yakshas' or malevolent demi-gods. Indeed, the Jātakas which reflect the popular side of Buddhism are replete with traces of tribal cults. All these primitive and tribal beliefs and practices of local origin were cleverly woven into the texture of a highly intellectual and rational scheme of doctrines which were Aryan in origin and character. The metaphysical and psychological basis in other words, of the Buddha's doctrinal scheme transformed the tribal

and regional cults of the Madhyadeśa and Eastern India into a universal and common religion of the people. Aśoka does not seem to have understood this popular social significance of Buddhism. At any rate he does not seem to have cared about it; neither his edicts nor Mauryan court art seem to have felt its impress. Ethnically Mauryan court art as seen in the Sanchi and Sarnath lions is pre-Aryan, but not wholly indigenous. Like the art of the pre-historic Indus Valley it shares in a common West-Asiatic culture-heritage which is presumably the product of the fusion of more than one ethnic factor and in which the aboriginally Indian plays its part no doubt. The most important contribution of this West-Asiatic culture to Indian art is naturalism which is lively and dynamic in the art of the Indus valley, but by the time it reached Maurya court art it had practically assumed a compact, hard and stagnant character. The Aryan intrusion had already made itself felt for more than a millenium when the Mauryas were on the throne, and a new ethnic structure was being slowly built up all over Northern India with more or less pronounced difference of ethnic accents in the different ethnic zones of this vast sub-continent. This difference was presumably due to the degree and extent of incorporation of the new element on the one hand and the strength and tenacity of the pre-Aryan elements on the other. Mauryan court art, in any case, does not seem to have felt the impress of this great new factor in the ethnic and hence in the social character of the country. It would seem that this was due more to the personal outlook of Aśoka and the general phil-Hellenism and phil-Achaemenism of the Mauryan monarchs. The edicts of Aśoka seem to suggest that there was a living art and a potent aesthetic ideology amongst the people in general which found expression through popular religious demonstrations and popular religious rites and

practices, through the 'lepya', 'lekhya' and 'charaṇa-chitras' and auspicious ceremonial observances. It may also be assumed that besides paintings and drawings in two dimensions, there must have also been current the practice of working in reliefs and in the round, in the age-old Indian materials of clay, cloth, straw, wood and metal. Barua has collected a number of literary references to such practices (JISOA, XI, pp. 65-68). The two figures in gold from Lauriya and Piprahwa may also be cited as instances on the point. I have already tried to suggest that the art of the Śūṅgas as evidenced at Barhut is nothing but the fixation of this basically tribal and primitive art of the people in permanent material, i. e. stone. ~

IX

FORMAL QUALITIES OF SUNGA ART

The pre-Aryan tribal and primitive elements in early Buddhism are but too well-known. Equally well-known is the fact that these elements were woven into the texture of a doctrinal scheme that is admittedly Aryan in origin and character. Is it unlikely that a similar process was at work in the realm of early Indian art which happens to be Buddhist in religious affiliation? This and other questions in respect of Śūṅga art and aesthetic ideology can be answered only by a detailed analysis of the character of form of the art of Barhut and Bodhgaya. The formal qualities of this art may therefore be taken up one by one.

We have seen that with the artists of the Maurya court the third dimension was not a problem they had ever to grapple with; indeed they had a ready made solution of the problem at their disposal which they applied in the context of form they

had to deal with. Under ordinary circumstances one would have expected this solution enter into the heritage of Śunga art. Quite contrary is however the case. The ground balustrade of Stūpa no. 2 of Sanchi which must be considered as representing the earliest phase of this art is wholly covered with animals, symbols and human figures held by flowing and luxuriant stalks of lotus, all worked in very low and flat reliefs, so low and flat that these reliefs may be said to be just essays in linear composition. The Barhut repository of art consists of reliefs on railings and gateways narrating the stories of the 'dūrenidāna' and 'avidūrenidāna' cycles of life of the Buddha, in square, rectangle, round or half-round panels or frames. These reliefs are invariably low and flat and are portrayed more as silhouettes sharply detached from their backgrounds. There is but slight attempt at modelling by grading the different planes of the relief in distinctive layers and then rounding off their contours, but the appearance of a flattened surface is there, always and invariably. Forms are conceived and presented not in terms of depth but in those of surface, and what optically should have been presented as hidden or partly covered is shown in part or in entirety. In other words, every thing is translated from the dimension of depth to that of surface. Nor are the figures shown in such sizes and proportions as may optically be suggested by their nearness or distance. On the contrary, they are big or small according to their meaning in the story depicted, i.e. according to their comprehensibility or reality, not in accordance with the optical impression. Objects are shown to the onlooker not by inference or suggestion, i.e. by showing one surface only in entirety and by suggesting the others hidden partly or wholly into the depth; they are rather made visible in entirety by tilting into the relief the other surfaces on the top

and at the sides. These devices make the framed reliefs of Barhut look like flat table tops served with objects in full visibility. Singly taken the objects themselves often reveal a three dimensional vision and treatment especially where oversecting and fore-shortening are frankly resorted to. But nowhere is there any attempt to achieve any illusion of depth, for the direction is always towards the surface. Besides such reliefs, there are independent large-size human figures of Yakshas and Yakshinīs etc. in high and bold relief and occupying prominent positions on unframed railing posts. The flat posts merely serve as supports; indeed the figures but cling to them. These figures unlike those of the reliefs are round modelled shapes either in rigid parallelism and frontality as we see in the figure of Sirima Devatā or in variegated 'bhaṅgas' and ample turns and bends in movements as one sees in the figure of Sudarśanā Yakshinī. In the former case the treatment is compact and conglomerated while in the latter it has a swaying grace and a flowing plastic consistency; but in both cases there is the unmistakable evidence of an attempt to relate the three dimensional extensiveness to the flatness of the surface. The attitude is clearly of a compromise between the full three dimensional extension and the flat surface which is equally noticeable in the relation of the full round shape of the figure and the flat post. Thus, whether in reliefs or in large-size independent figures there is in Barhut evidence of a conflict and a resultant compromise through various devices, between two dimensional flat surface on the one hand and three dimensional vision on the other.

I am inclined to think that from the very silhouette-like low and flat reliefs of the ground balustrade of Stūpa no. 2 of Sanchi to the attempt in the reliefs and the large-size human

figures of Barhut, there is a frank attempt at progressive realisation of what had originally been a two dimensional form in 'charaṇa-chitras' or scroll-paintings in terms of relief on such permanent material as stone. Early Indian art as exhibited on the balustrade of Sanchi Stūpa no. 2 and on the rails and posts of Barhut may in the light of this assumption be said to be a quest for the third dimension, and these reliefs but exemplify the devices the artists adopted for the purpose. Any one with a comprehension of Indian 'paṭa-chitra' tradition of primitive folk-painting in flat surfaces would be able to realise how difficult the quest had been. This explains, in my view, much of the shyness, the modesty and the hesitancy that one notices in these reliefs; it also shows the conflict that is unmistakable in them between flat surface on the one hand and the three dimensional extension on the other, as well as the resultant compromise. The early Indian artists of Barhut ignored the Maurya solution of the problem; indeed they had nothing to do with the Maurya tradition and wanted to solve the problem in their own way and according to their own tradition. The device they adopted for the purpose fully confirms my assumption. For instance, when they show in entirety figures or objects that ought optically to have been presented hidden or partly covered or when they present an object in small or large proportions not as they optically appear to us but in accordance with the meaning of the relation into which they enter with other figure of the story, or when they tilt the relief to show objects in entirety, or extend the volume of an object or its part not into depth but on the surface, they follow essentially the methods of primitive folk tradition of India that has come down to our present day in the shape and from of 'paṭa-chitras'.

In the art of the Śuṅgas, the human form which is conspicuous by its absence in the hitherto known examples of Mauryan art plays an important role; but it is accepted and treated merely as one of the many components of nature, not as the main pivot as in later Indian sculpture. Here he is completely at one with trees, creepers, animals and hundred and one other objects of nature. The method of narrating the stories is the simplest, the most direct, and the language most unaffected. Indeed, men and women of Barhut have almost a primitive and tribal simplicity. Since they are fully co-ordinated with and apprehended as part of nature itself they have no special emphasis or accent and are in no way different from animals or plants. They do not express any emotions nor are they idealised in any way. Now, these are characteristics also of the Jātaka stories themselves, and indeed of all tribal and primitive folk stories of the world. Besides this tribal and primitive character of the human figure as seen in Barhut, its comparative disregard in Mauryan court art but exuberant wealth in that of the Śuṅgas calls, I think, for an explanation. We know that Northern (i.e. Nordic of which Indo-Aryan is but a facet) art is characterised by its logical and abstract, rhythmical and disciplined designs and patterns but is conspicuous in its disregard of the human figure. It is only when the Northern people was brought into contact with the Southerners that man came to play his part and gradually became the pivot of artistic representation. But on the other hand, the Northerners brought with them into the South not only abstract patterns and designs but also an ornament flowing in rhythmic curves. The fusion of these two trends, the Northern and the Mediterranean (i.e. the Southern), can best be seen in ancient Greece and mediaeval Italy. Is it

15 unreasonable to argue that the same phenomenon is observable in India? The social and religious ideology of Aśoka characterised by a sense of ethical purity and rational outlook as evidenced in his edicts is essentially Indo-Aryan. His preference for animal symbols and even rhythmically flowing vegetal designs appears to be Northern (i.e. Indo-Aryan) in affiliation. This also probably explains why Mauryan court art emphasises the animal figures more than the human. On the other hand the wealth of human figures in Śunga art is to be explained by the assumption of the existence of an art in pre-Mauryan India in which men and women must have played an important role, and which was un-Aryan in racial character and ideology. [The human figure which came later on to be the main exponent of Indian art of the classical and early mediaeval periods, considered from this point of view, appears to be the gift of un-Aryan Southerners of India. It is true, evidences for such a hypothesis are not present before us in all their details as we have them in the case of Greek or Italian art, but if what modern researches, mainly by Strzygowski, have revealed to us in respect of Northern and Mediterranean arts and their intermingling in various centres of early and mediaeval Europe have any objective value and significance for early Indian art and if, further, we have to seek for an explanation of the various culture trends in early Indian art, I do not think we can reasonably escape from such a hypothesis. It is well known that the Buddha issued definite injunctions against representing himself in human form; indeed he was, according to certain texts (Cowell, 'Jātaka,' 479), averse to image-representations. I am inclined to believe that this was due to the general Indo-Aryan outlook that the Buddha shared. In any case, this probably explains the absence of representa-

tion of human figures in Mauryan art as well the concrete symbols—the vajrāsana, the foot-prints, the wheel, the 'stūpa' the sacred tree etc.—by which the Buddha is represented in Śunga art. The early Buddhist attitude was essentially religious, not artistic. But as time wore on, the emotional and sensuous of the pre-Aryan Southerner got the better of the religious and rational of the Aryan Northerner and eventually transformed these symbols into human form vibrant with life.

[A most characteristic formal quality of Śunga art is its flowing linear rhythm that binds all isolated objects in one continuous stream of life as it were. Look at any coping stone and you will find a huge stout lotus stalk flowing in rhythmical waves from form to form, not only binding each isolated item in one whole but permeating each isolated object itself, including the limbs of human beings, the animals and the trees with the same flowing linear rhythm. A most perfect example of this flowing linear rhythm is furnished by the representation of a griffin on a half-medallion on a railing post of the Sanchi Stūpa no. 2. But this is equally evident in the majority of the panelled reliefs and in the bolder and frameless large-size human figures on the upright posts. Even in the round and half round panels there is a slow but ceaseless flow of free rhythmical movement. The figures may be loosely dispersed on the reliefs, singly and in an isolated manner, but each one even in their isolation has to feel the touch of that rhythm and be swayed and permeated by it, whether it is on the reliefs of the Sanchi Stūpa no. 2 or on those of Barhut. Wherever luxuriant vegetation finds a place its radiating and continuous linear movements dominate the composition and all the figures irrespective of action and status become equal and integral parts of the whole. A panel of the so-called Prasenajit pillar and the figures of Yakṣiṇīs Chandrā

and Sudarśanā may be cited as examples of this flowing and rhythmical linear movement. In the former a slowly gliding curve passes over the bodies of the seated figures that constitute the music party. It sways each individual figure and bends it to the tune of the curve, but it does not stop there. It flows uninterruptedly along the swaying hands of the four dancers, through the movements of their bodies including that of the young one at the bottom. The entire composition is held by this slow but ceaselessly flowing linear rhythm that imparts life to the scene portrayed. Another scene equally vibrant with life shows the potency of this linear rhythm in no uncertain manner ; it is the scene of Chuḍāmaha festival in the Sudharmā Hall of the Vaijayanta palace. The figures of Chandrā, Alakanandā and Sudarśanā Yakshiṇīs, treated in relation to surface, nevertheless consist essentially of swaying and gliding curves of rhythmical lines. Even the jewelled drapery swaying vertically is more or less linearised in pattern, and that linear rhythm is imparted to the details of the tree, the 'vāhanas', and to the modelling of the body itself. But the discerning eye of Kramrisch, as early as 1924, observed that there was another trend in Śunga art which was equally potent, a trend characterised by a disregard of this flowing linear rhythm. This trend is best illustrated in several panels of the so-called Ajātaśatru pillar representing the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī, the preaching of 'Abhidharma' in the Tushita heaven and Buddha's descent from the Tushita heaven by a ladder. It can be seen at once that these scenes are all completely devoid of any free and flowing linear rhythm ; the figures are hard and isolated and the compositions are regulated in a schematic manner by vertical and horizontal lines. It is only an agitated display of light and darkness that disturb the otherwise static character of the scenes. The trend is equally marked in several

frameless figures standing on upright posts ; such are the figures of Virudhaka Yaksha, Gāṅgeya Yaksha, Sūchiloma Yaksha, Chakra-vāka Nāgarāja, Mihira, the Sun god of Uttarapatha and Sirima Devatā, for example. No linear rhythm enlivens these figures ; features isolated, compact and conglomerated are flattened in terms of surface, and give them an appearance of static and mechanical rigidity. In direct contrast to the flat treatment of the chest and abdomen of the male figures is the compact roundity of the breast-volume of Sirima Devatā which illustrates the conflict between the flatness of the surface and the third dimensional extensiveness.

It is now possible to postulate that between the reliefs of the Ajātaśatru pillar and figures like Virudhaka Yaksha and Sirima Devatā on the one hand and the reliefs of the Prasenajit pillar and the figures of Ghandrā and Sudarsanā Yakshinis on the other there is the oscillation of an artistic vision which now inclines toward slow ceaseless flow of linear rhythm and again towards static and mechanical, vertical and horizontal schemes of composition. It is further reasonable to argue that the latter trend was gradually being overpowered by the former which means that isolated, compact and static rush of forms was progressively being subordinated to the free and rhythmic flow of lines and swaying balance. Now, Strzygowski's studies in Nomadic Art have revealed that this ceaselessly flowing linear rhythm and swaying balance are Northern in origin and affiliation. It may therefore be assumed that this Indo-Aryan trait, even in Barhut, was increasingly on its way towards a rationalisation of the endless onrush of form after form packed densely one upon another, as we see it on the reliefs of the Ajātaśatru pillar or on those of the gateways of Sanchi Stūpa no. 1. The wild exuberance of form of

non-Aryan and non-Mediterranean imagination was thus subordinated and bound down by the logic of rhythm and wisdom of balance ; isolated and compact forms were co-ordinated into the discipline of a flowing linear movement and brought to the level of rhythmically composed representations. One need not be reminded that a similar process was at work in early Buddhism as well.

X

SOCIAL COMPONENTS OF ŚUNGA ART

It is curious that Maurya art knows nothing of the creative fusion of the two trends referred to above ; it is ignorant of the flowing linear movement, and of inexhaustible onrush of form it is unconscious. In its conventionalised naturalism and stagnant compactness it belongs to the final phase of a different art-tradition altogether. Touched by Indo-Aryan religious ideology it seems to have repudiated the human figure, but since it belonged to the last sequel of the art of the Asiatic West it was untouched either by the flowing linear movement and swaying balance of the North or by the wild growth of imaginative form of the un-Aryan South. Maurya art reflects the last stages of a tradition, Śunga art the initial stages of quite a different one. Yet Śunga art can not be labelled wholly as 'primitive'. It is true, certain primitive traits as I have already pointed out, persist, but these traits are ethnically conditioned and are not attributable to technical limitation, not even the translation of depth in terms of surface. (Indeed few of the difficulties and limitations of 'primitive' art are to be seen in Śunga art, or otherwise it would not have been possible for the artists of Barhut and Bodhgaya to show figures in a large variety of

attitudes, nor would it have been possible to employ oversecting and fore-shortening with ease wherever and whenever desirable. The ease and self-confidence of the figures of Bodhgaya are more illustrative on this point. Indeed, Barhut and Bodhgaya illustrate beyond doubt that they had a vast experience of ancient practice behind them, in low or bold reliefs or in their painted counterparts. This is further noticeable in the somewhat conscious elegance and sophistication of some of the bolder relief figures of both Barhut and Bodhgaya as well as in a number of terracottas usually assigned to the Śuṅga period, an elegance and sophistication expressed not only through their drapery, jewellery and coiffeurs but also through their poses and attitudes. It can safely be assumed that the art of the Śuṅga period reflects a stage when an art of folk and tribal origin and affiliation came to attain for obvious reasons recognition in the hands of a widening religious brotherhood patronised mostly by the landed and commercial middle classes and partly by the nobility and the rich mercantile classes of the Madhyadeśa.

The facts for such an assumption are abundantly clear in the inscriptions of Barhut. The modern village of Barhut lies about one hundred miles to the south-east of Allahabad, and happens to be situated just at the northern end of the long narrow valley of Mahiyar near the point where the high road from Ujain and Bhilsa (ancient Vidiśā) to Patna (ancient Pāṭalīputra) turns to the north with Kosam (ancient Kauśāmbī) as a notable halting place and thus it coincides very nearly with the position of the jungle tract Vana in relation to the ancient Southern road referred to in early Buddhist texts. Buddhaghosha, or better, the author of the Sutta-Nipāta Commentary, knew this jungle-tract "which was called by some Tumbanagara

and by others, Vana-Sāvatthī or Jungle-Śrāvastī...." This Tumbanagara may or may not be identical with the Tumbavana or Tubavana referred to in a few votive labels on the railing of the Sanchi Stūpa no. 1 ; but the fact that Barhut was situated at a point on the ancient high way of trade and commerce is significant and may not be lost sight of. An inscription on the lower pillar of the Eastern Gateway states : "Within the dominion of the Śuṅgas the gateway has been caused to be made and the workmanship in stone produced by Vātsiputra Dhanabhūti, the son of Gotiputa Āgaraju and grandson of Gārgiputra Viśvadeva." Two more fragmentary inscriptions reveal that two other gateways or ornamental arches were erected by the same king who must have been an ally if not a feudatory of the Śuṅgas. Dhana-
bhūti's son Vṛiddhapāla happens to be the donor of a rail-bar while a queen Nāgarakṣitā of another. One Chāpādevī, the wife of Revatimitra of Vidiśā, donated one, while another, Phalgudeva, also from Vidiśā, donated a second pillar. Like Barhut, Bodhgaya also seems to have stood on an important point of the ancient highway of trade and commerce. Here too the patronage given to the art reared up by the local Saṃgha seems to have come from the royalty. All that remains to-day of this art are the reliefs on a stone-railing which is said to have flanked the path the Buddha trod after his Enlightenment. Epigraphic evidence suggests that among the patrons of this art were the queens Kuramgī and Nāgadevā, the wives of Kings Indramitra and Brahmamitra whose coins found in different localities of Northern India are well-known and who probably were of Śuṅga lineage. While these names are to be ascribed to the royalty and the nobility there is a host of other names of donors in the Barhut inscriptions who may be said to belong to the class of church-dignitaries (ārya panthaka) and to the wealthy landed and mercantile classes. In one

instance two ladies of the same family and a gentleman together made a gift; in a second the citizens of a town collectively made a gift; while there is a third instance where the Buddhist 'dāyakas' of Purikā collectively offered a donation. There can be no doubt that the majority, if not all, of the donors were either Buddhists or active supporters of the faith and the Saṃgha, and they were mostly townfolks. One of the votive inscriptions record the gift of a nun of the local monastic abode—'avāsikāya bhikhuniyā dānam'; it is therefore reasonable to argue that the monks and nuns of the local Saṃghārāma were the moving figures responsible for rearing up the Railing and the Gateways and they were the trustees of the gifts made. The donations came from such places as Pāṭalīputra Kauśāmbī, Chekula (Caul, near Bombay), Karahakaṭa (Karhad in Satara district), port of Śrīputra in the extreme south-west, Purikā, Bhogavardhana, Nāsika, Paḍela (Pandaria in Bilaspur district, C. P. or Parel near Bombay), Mathurā, Bhojakata (in Vidarbha, Berar), Asitamasā etc. Buddhism in the second century B. C. had reached a stage in its career when it had outgrown the age of the Master and his apostles, when the Buddhist Saṃghas were being developed and when the Saṃghārāmas were fast becoming centres of religious and cultural activities of a considerable section of the upper class population.' It is now a common knowledge that the Saṃghārāmas were largely patronised by the royalty, the nobility, the commercial classes including the artisans, and the Buddhist laity in which the 'gahapatis' or the landed gentry and wealthy citizens played the dominant role. Moreover, Buddhism was no longer a local movement within the bounds of Bihar and Eastern U. P., but had already spread far and wide. It must also be remembered that the artists and craftsmen responsible for visual presentation of the religion and thus bringing it

to the door of the people in general, were also organised into art and craft guilds or 'śreṇīs'. The painter, 'Thāpati' or the architect, 'Tachhaka' or the sculptor or carver, 'Vaddhaki' or the carpenter and the 'Pāshāṇa-kottaka', all had presumably their own guilds which speaks of a developed sense of civic organisation. It is difficult to say if all these arts and crafts were considered equally honorable; but from the fact that acting, dancing and music were listed among the despised callings, it is not unreasonable to think that some of the above crafts were considered low in social estimation because of tribal aboriginal folks whose hereditary professions generally they were. [In any case, these artists and craftsmen seem to have combined in them the social ideology of the upper classes and of civic life on the one hand and that of the lower and despised castes and classes and their folk and aboriginal life on the other. In the sort of civic sophistication and delicate tastefulness that are unmistakable in the Śunga terracottas or in the consciously langourous attitudes, sensuous 'bhāṅgas' and luxurious ornamentation of the Yakshiṇīs of Barhut and Bodhgaya, one can easily see the social ideology of the upper and middle class patrons and donors, while in a number of folded-palm and kneeling or standing figures on the reliefs it is easy to imagine the self-same patrons and donors represented with all their naive personal vanity. As in early Buddhism and in the formal qualities of early Buddhist art of Barhut and Bodhgaya, so in the social components of this art as well one can thus easily see a fusion of the different grades of the people, right from the royalty and the nobility down to the aboriginal folks, and the ideas and ideologies of the respective castes and classes. But since the Buddhist Saṃgha was very largely patronised by the commercial and to an extent by the landed middle classes, the social content of Śunga art, particularly of the terracottas

and the larger figures, reflect more of their tastes and preferences, while in the general subject-matter of the reliefs and in their formal qualities of treatment, composition and manner of presentation it invariably reflects the current popular tastes, ideas, preferences and traditions of the various grades of the ordinary folk.

✓ [Śunga art is thus the first organised and integrated art activity of the Indian people as a whole and stands directly counterposed to the court-art of the Mauryas. It reflects for the first time the results of the ethnic, social and religious fusion and integration that had been evolved through centuries on the Indian soil, more particularly in the Madhyadeśa. It is true, artists from the North-west, from those regions where the Kharoshthi script was in vogue, worked side by side with the artists nearer home; the meaning of mason-marks in that script is unmistakable. Equally unmistakable is the meaning of the use of certain West-Asiatic motifs and Persepolitan column and capital forms, bearing clear testimony to the work done by artists from the North-west. But all such forms and motifs have been so completely fused and integrated into local forms and idioms that they have become just vague memories. Considered from this point of view Śunga art happens to be the first chapter of national ✓ and indigenous Indian art and expresses the contemporary Indian mind in all its grades and shades. Iconographically too this fusion and integration make themselves evident. Here in the reliefs of Barhut and Bodhgaya one can witness such gods of civilised conception as Sūrya, Lakshmi and Indra mingling freely ✓ with such tribal deities as the 'yakshas' and 'yakshiṇīs', the 'vṛikshadevatās' and the 'nāga' spirits, 'apsaras' and 'kinnaras' of popular faith and imagination. There can be no doubt that types and iconographic forms of such divinities as Lakshmi and

Sūrya and of such conceptions as the woman touching the tree with her foot and grasping its twigs with her hand and thereby bringing it into efflorescence had received their shape and sanction in ancient practice long before Barhut and Bodhgaya. It is interesting to observe that these forms and motifs can be followed from age to age through the entire realm of early Indian art.

XI

BARHUT AND BODHGAYA

Now that we have an understanding of the social components and of the more important formal qualities that are socially conditioned we may profitably proceed to bring out briefly the more important elements that characterise the art of of Barhut and Bodhgaya, their common features and their differences.

The general tone of the Śuṅga art of Barhut is very modest, sober, very much restrained ; they seem to be untouched by any dramatic moment or by any high tide even when such occasions present themselves. They speak briefly and almost in an embarrassed manner. There is an unmistakable solemnity in their appearance ; they are earnest, dignified and detached. A cross-section of the entire corpus of Jātaka stories would also reveal the same solemn repose and detachment of the characters, the same simple but dignified earnestness. This does not bespeak an ever serious and solemn attitude towards life, but is rather expressive of a simple and unsophisticated diction, a primitive means wherewith to express the multi-coloured views of the visible world. It is the unitone of the primitive single-string

instrument. In Bodhgaya the manner and method of narration are the same, but the diction is more easy and elegant, a bit more facile, but at the same time little thinner and more superficial.

The modesty and sobriety of diction are however no bar to clarity of expression which is one important characteristic of this art. The stories are told with scrupulous exhaustiveness; no single detail is left out. Clearly, the artist's intention is that no one should miss any thing even though not previously conversant with the stories. In Bodhgaya, however, they are abbreviated; stories are more summarily told. Descriptive labels also disappear, so that it seems that the narratives were by now well-known. Evidently there was no more any need of labelling them or portraying every single detail. In order to realise the perfect understandability of the narratives the artists of Barhut took to what is known as the method of continuous narration which is the same in all early art employed for religious propagation. In the reliefs of Barhut and also later one would find scenes in which the main stages of a given story localised in the same spot are portrayed in one and the same relief with the hero of the story repeatedly shown. The incidents may have taken place at various intervals but the artist visualises them in one unit so far as time is concerned. The fact that they took place in the same place justifies their presentation in one composition. Time is thus eliminated altogether, or various points of time may thus be said to coalesce in one visual unit. Sometime, successive stages of a story are divided into several panels; in such scenes the continuity of the narration is interrupted no doubt, but the sequence of the story can clearly be followed from panel to panel and the breaking up of the connectedness of time seems to be intentional.

This exhaustive clarity of vision and expression is in no small measure helped by the clearness of the outlines of the figures and their contours. The cutting of the outline of the figures into the stone is almost perpendicular, with the result that a thin shadow separates the respective forms from the background as well as one form from the other, but in Barhut the shadows are not yet connected by any rhythmical display, nor is there any uniformity of the darkness of the background. In Bodhgaya, however, the cutting is at a slight angle with the ground of the relief so that there is more scope for modelling the figures which seem to emerge from the uniform dark background.

The Barhut artist seems to delight in the handling of the human figure; the joy of a new discovery seems to urge them on to interpret human figures in as many positions and attitudes as they could visually perceive of. In Barhut the attempt is yet full of effort; the single parts of the body are shown clearly and distinctly in a most exhaustive manner and they are not always even linked integrally into a rhythmical whole. In Bodhgaya the single parts reach an integration; clarity and exhaustiveness remain, but the body moves more freely and it becomes a living entity. The surface of the body, the contour of the figures become charged with life which is to say that the surface is modelled in detail and in a subtle manner so that the intention is not just to define the body but to suggest that it is warm blood and soft flesh as well. This is clearly evident, plus a sensuousness, in that almost coquettishly elegant figure of the woman being helped to climb a tree. Indeed, technically as well as from the point of view of visual perception Bodhgaya is a step forward from Barhut. Reliefs are less crowded, all non-essentials being left out. The medley of forms of the

Ajātasatru pillar of Barhut has given place to order, brevity and clearness, and the figures have all been brought out clearly and exhaustively. The conflict between the surface and the three dimensional extension has dissolved to a considerable extent, and the direction is now more towards the depth; figures are now shown in fuller roundity and parallel to the ground. The heaviness of form still persists but it has already shed its static weight and masked stolidity.

XII

CHARACTER OF ŚUNGA ART

Enough has been said to show that the art of the time of the Śuṅgas is not an isolated phase in the history of Indian art, that it had at its back a large repository of ancient practice which came to be fixed in stone under the patronage of the Buddhist saṃgha, the royalty and the nobility, and the wealthy and prosperous landed and commercial classes of the time of the Śuṅgas. I have also tried to show that it represents the continuity of a tradition which reflects the ethnic fusion that had been going on for centuries, and which had been born of the seed sown on the Indian soil, more particularly in the Madhyadeśa and parts of Eastern India. Further, I have sought to demonstrate that from the very first stage of Barhut to the last of Bodhgaya there is a progressive evolution of the tradition referred to above. It was during this time that the basis of some of the essential qualities of what we call Indian plastic art was laid down. These essential qualities would persist through the ages, throughout the modulations brought about by the passage of time and by the ethnic conditions of the country.

Unlike Maurya court art, the art of the time of the Śūṅgas is born of India's own seed with deep and intimate ethnic and local roots. It aims at collective expression of the ideas and ideologies of the people of Madhyadeśa and Eastern India and reflects their tastes and preferences. Maurya naturalism views the visible world in a state of momentary nervous tension and renders it in stagnant compactness and strength; it relies essentially on the outer aspect of things. Śūṅga naturalism on the other hand does not ignore the outer aspect of things but links it in an inherent connectedness with a pre-existent situation. This view of the visible world gives to Śūṅga Art its lively and fluid character, a quality that is ever present in Indian plastic art. A simple awareness of life enlivens and illumines the art of the Śūṅgas; a consciousness of earthly power, dignity and grandeur impart to the art of the Mauryas its monumental strength and heavy compactness.

Śūṅga art is richer in social content and in the social components of its appeal and patronage. Its direction is more collective than individual, and its motive more narrative and representational than suggestive and symbolical. While Maurya art is conscious, courtly and sophisticated Śūṅga art is naive, popular and perhaps also primitive in a way. These essential differences, it may now be safely argued, reflect two different culture-ideologies; one reared up by the Mauryas and limited within the court and expressive of a mind highly urban, sophisticated and international in outlook, while the other no doubt ethnically conditioned reflect a national outlook and popular character. Maurya art reflects the exhaustion of a tradition born outside of its own people; Śūṅga art reflects the lively unfoldment of a tradition born of the blood and flesh of the people to whom it belongs.

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

- Fig. 1. Basarh-Bakhira Column. Lion-crowned. Compared to other known Maurya columns this is heavy and shorter in proportion, clumsy in execution and coarse in feeling and appearance. Mark the square and unadorned plinth or abacus on which rests the lion with its rump and tail jutting out. Though a free and independent figure, the lion is not only rough and crude in execution, but has not yet evolved the form and appearance so as to make of itself an integrated whole with the abacus, capital and the shaft. Perhaps of pre-Asokan date. Photo : A. S. I.
- Fig. 2. Lauriya-Nandangarh Column. Lion-crowned. Mark the elegant proportion and classic dignity of the shaft, and the harmonisation of the shaft, capital and the abacus. The crowning lion finds it difficult to fit itself in the round abacus ; its rump and hind legs project beyond the abacus in an unbalanced manner. Compared to the Basarh-Bakhira lion the present example is more tense and tight without doubt, also more clear and precise ; but stylisation is on the increase and both form and treatment tend to be more conventional. C. 243 B. C. Bears an edict of the 27th year of Aśoka's reign. Photo : A. S. I.
- Fig. 3. Dhauli (Bhuvanesvar, Orissa). Elephant. Front view. Cut out of live-rock that bears the well-known Kalinga Edict. Fully modelled in the round, the elephant exhibits a flowing plasticity and linear rhythm that are unknown in the Mauryan lion figures. About life-size.

Perhaps the earliest extant example of Asokan sculpture. Photo : Johnston & Hoffman.

- Fig. 4. Sāñkāśya. Standing elephant crowning the capital of an Aśoka column. It suggests a comparison with the Dhauli elephant, but is certainly on a lower level of artistic conception. Its plump form is, plastically speaking, comparatively static, and execution clumsy. The lower border framing the abacus appears to be a translation from wooden originals. C. 255 B. C. Photo : Bachhofer.
- Fig. 5. Sanchi (Bhopal State, C. I.). Four semi-lions seated back to back, crowning the capital of an Aśoka column. Architecturally, the Sanchi quadripartite conforms to the solution already achieved at Sarnath. Sculpturally too it belongs to the same conventional and stylised treatment ; but the manes are treated with increased schematisation which is perhaps an indication of a date later than that of Sarnath. C. 235 B. C. Sanchi Museum. Photo : A. S. I.
- Fig. 6. Rampurva. Single lion 'recouchant' crowning the capital of the northern Aśoka column. C. 244 B. C. The column bears an Asokan edict dated in the 26th regnal year of the king. Photo : A. S. I.
- Fig. 7. Lauriya-Nandangarh. Single lion 'recouchant' crowning the capital of an Aśoka column. Compared to the Basarh-Bakhira lion the present example is more tense and tight, surface treatment is also more clear and precise, but stylisation is on the increase ; both form and treatment tend to be more conventional. The Rampurva lion, though earlier by a year, shows decided advance in the clear and precise cutting of the stone, in general finish, in the feeling for form and in

linear rhythm. Modelling is also more powerful and vigorous. The Rampurva example, artistically speaking, is even superior to the Sarnath quadripartite. The Lauriya-Nandangarh specimen is, comparatively speaking, thin and clumsy. C. 243 B. C. Photo : A. S. I.

- Fig. 8. Sarnath (Benares, U. P.), Lion quadripartite crowning the Asokan column. Of all Mauryan sculptures it is the most well-known, most highly spoken of and reproduced on most occasions ; but the entire conception and execution are conventional from beginning to end. Compositionally the accumulation of form is schematic. The extravagance of form saps the life out of the object it represents. The modelling has nothing in common with Medo-Achaemenian sculptures ; on the contrary its accents definitely belong to Hellenistic plastic tradition as practised by Graeco-Bactrian artists. The powerful but conventional feeling for volume and preference for stagnant compact forms also point to the same direction. C. 240 B. C. The column bears the famous Schism Edict of Aśoka. Sarnath Museum. Photo : A. S. I.

- Fig. 9. Rampurva. Standing bull crowning the capital of the southern Aśoka column. The animal stands with its full weight on earth in quiet and restrained dignity, and the idea has been rendered with remarkable clarity and perfect realism. The modelling is vigorous but not conventional ; plastic and linear sense fully mature but not schematised ; a dynamic naturalism gives it potency and strength. In aesthetic vision and treatment it perhaps reflects the legacy of the art of the bulls of the prehistoric Indus Valley. C. 243 B. C. Indian Museum, Calcutta. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 10. Sarnath (Benares, U. P.). Striding bull carved in high relief on the abacus of the Sarnath column of Aśoka. A comparison with the Rampurva bull is at once suggested. This bull is rendered with all the tension and accentuation of muscles, of veins and bones ; the execution is also clear and precise ; but the entire treatment is conventional, modelling coagulated and tension in movement over-emphasised. It belongs to the same aesthetic vision and treatment as those of the Sarnath quadripartite, and has hardly anything to do with the Rampurva bull or the bulls of the pre-historic Indus Valley. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 11. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Medallion of a Rail-pillar. A dancing couple of Kinnaras. A rhythmically flowing linear movement unites these two figures into an integrated composition in which angles and straight lines dominate, and imparts to the scene the rhythm of dance that permeates not only the limbs and hangings of garments but the contours of the body as well. Their mask-like faces conceal the rhythm that is within. C. 150 B. C. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 12. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-medallion. Dream of Māyādevī. Mark the elephant whose size is conditioned by its importance in the story itself. Mark also the tilted bed. The artist places the understanding of the story above every thing else. Aesthetically this piece belongs to a class different from No. 11. Here the elements are isolated, they exist by themselves ; no linear rhythm binds them into an integrated whole. C. 150 B. C. Indian Museum. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 13. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Prasenajit Rail-

pillar. From bottom : (1) employment of nymphs by Māra to tempt the Buddha ; (2) scene of defeat and exasperation of Māra ; (3) scene of Enlightenment of the Buddha. In scene No. 1 a slowly gliding curve passes over the bodies of the seated figures that constitute the music party. It sways each individual figure and bends it to the tune of the curve, but it does not stop there. It flows uninterruptedly along the swaying hands of the four dancers, through the movements of their bodies including that of the young one at the bottom. The entire composition is held by this slow but ceaselessly flowing linear rhythm that imparts life to the scene portrayed. This is one trend in Barhut. C. 150 B. C. Indian Museum. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 14. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Ajātaśatru Rail-pillar. From bottom : (1) Great Miracle at Sravasti at the foot of the Gandamba tree ; (2) Buddha's descent from Tushita heaven by a ladder ; (3) Preaching of Abhidharma in Tushita heaven. It can be seen at once that these scenes are all completely devoid of any free and flowing linear rhythm ; the figures are hard and isolated and the compositions are regulated in a schematic manner by vertical and horizontal lines. It is only an agitated display of light and darkness that disturb the otherwise static character of the scenes. This is the other trend in Barhut. C. 150 B. C. Indian Musuem. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 15. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post, Gaṅgeya Yaksha.

Fig. 16. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post, Chakravāka Nāgarāja.

- Fig. 17. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post (from Batanmara). Alakamanda Yakshinī.
 Fig. 18. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post. Sirimā Devatā.
 Fig. 19. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post. Kuvera Yaksha.
 Fig. 20. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post Sūchiloma Yaksha.
 Fig. 21. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post, Sudarśanā Yakshinī.
 Fig. 22. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand). Rail-post. Chūla-kokā Devatā.

Figs. 17, 19, 21 & 22 belong to trend No. 1 of Barhut, being examples of the flowing and rhythmical linear movement. Treated in relation to surface, they nevertheless consist essentially of swaying and gliding curves of rhythmical lines. Even the jewelled or unadorned draperies swaying vertically are more or linearised in pattern, and that linear rhythm is imparted to the details of the trees, the vāhanas and the modelling of the body itself.

Figs. 15, 16, 18 & 20 belong to trend No. 2 of Barhut. No linear rhythm enlivens these figures; features isolated, compact and conglomerated are flattened in terms of surface, and give them an appearance of static and mechanical rigidity. In direct contrast to the flat treatment of the chest and abdomen of the male figures is the compact roundness of the breast volume of fig. 18 which illustrates the conflict between the flatness of the surface and the third dimensional extensiveness, C. 150. B. C. Photo : Bachhofer.

Figs. 23 & 24. Patna Two Yakshas standing. These are almost identical in form and appearance, conception and treatment, dress and ornament ; both have each on the scarf of their shoulder a line of Brāhmī inscription that has palaeographically been dated round about the beginning of the Christian era. The heaviness, the almost archaic stolidity and weighty appearance, the conflict between fully rounded and modelled volume as seen in the arms, breasts and abdomen on the one hand and flat surface at the back on the other seem to suggest that they have a close affinity with the huge, heavy and 'primitive' Bodhisattvas of the Mathura school. On the other hand so far as general shape and appearance of the upper part of the body and the quality and character of the modelling are concerned, a kinship with the art of the bigger figure reliefs on the eastern gate of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi seems to be admissible. Life-size. Beginning of the first century A. D. Patna Museum. Photo A. S. I.

Fig. 25. Bodhgaya (Gaya, Bihar). Indra as Brāhmaṇa Śānti. Top : Gaja-lakshmi. Mark the free and easy gait of the figure which though spread out in space reveals a clearer understanding of the human figure. The modelling tends to be softer and more sensitive than Barhut, and the linear movement more free and flowing. C. 50 B. C. Photo : Bachhofer.

Fig. 26. Parkham (Mathura, U. P.), Yaksha standing. Inscribed. The lightly bent knees and the comparatively thin legs have some kinship with those of the Maṇibhadra Yaksha statue from Pawaya, near Gwalior, while the frank and unconditional frontality, attaching little or no impor-

tance to the back, reminds one of 'primitive' Bodhisattvas of the Mathura school. Doubtless here too, we have a clear expression of the weighty and imposing earthiness that traditional Indian imagination connects with its Yakshas and Yakshinīs. It is one of the first and earliest of Mathura primitives and forms the initial chapter of the Mathura school of sculpture. C. 50 B. C.—50 A. D. More than life-size. Mathura Museum. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 27. Lomaśa Rishi Cave (Gaya, Bihar). Portion of facade showing translation into stone of wooden construction. Mark the elephants modelled almost in the round and in full plasticity; the flowing linear rhythm is also equally in evidence. A parallelism with the elephant of Dhauli is at once suggested. Since the facade is an exact translation from wood into stone, it may be presumed that the art represented by these animals and that of Dhauli was long in practice in wood, and perhaps also in clay. C. 275 B. C. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 28. Lohanipur (Patna, Bihar). Torso of a naked Jaina Tirthaṅkara. In its tight and stiff modelling, in the fully rounded arms and thighs and in its general earthy heaviness of form it has a kinship with the Patna Yakshas; but the lifeless inertia and the flat surface treatment of the back, the primitive and archaic outlook and appearance, heavy and little bit unbalanced proportion that characterise the statue seem to link it with the Parkham Yaksha. C. 50 B. C.—50 A. D. Little less than life-size. Photo : Patna Museum.

Fig. 29. Bodhgaya (Gaya, Bihar). Rail-post. Man helping young girl climb a tree. In spite of the flowing linear move-

ment that is apparent, and the dynamic character of the theme, the figure itself lacks the emotional touch. Technically in advance of Barhut, it has yet a heaviness of form which is heightened by 'the manner in which the forms are spread out in space.' An urban sophistication and a conscious coquettish elegance are much too evident, but more significant aesthetically is the advanced conception of the human figure. This has been possible due to a clearer appreciation of the three dimensional value and of organic and intergrated understanding of human figuration. C. 50 B. C. Photo : Bachhofer.

Fig. 30. Didarganj (Patna, Bihar). Standing Yakshiṇī bearing chaurī. Front view. One witnesses here perhaps an earliest urban, conscious and sophisticated female type and form immortalised in later Indian art and literature. Plastically fully round, it is bound by no law of frontality and has no primitivity whatsoever about it. Mark the sensitiveness of flesh as revealed in what remains of the modelling of the abdomen, the chin and the region round the eyes. Chronologically it seems to stand somewhere between the Bodhgaya woman climbing the tree and the daintier and more lively and sophisticated Yakshiṇīs of the Mathura reliefs of the second century A. D. Life-size. C. 50 A. D. Patna Museum. Photo : Bachhofer.

Fig. 31. Bodhgaya (Gaya, Bihar). Rail-post. In panelled arrangement of scenes it follows the Barhut tradition which is but translation and adaptation of contemporary paṭa-chitra tradition. But the figures move more freely and easily with an intimacy and familiarity unknown in

Barhut. A clearer and more organic vision of the human figure is also unmistakable as also an increased appreciation of three dimensional value. C. 50 B. C. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 32. Besnagar. Yakshinī standing. Free round figure. The earthy heaviness of form of early Indian art persists ; but the modelling, the linear rhythm, and the feeling for human form are far in advance of Barhut. The figure also reveals a clearer understanding of the human form. C. 50 B. C. India Museum. Photo : A. S. I.

Fig. 33. Barhut (Nagod State, Baghelkhand) Inner view of a quadrant coping. From left : hanging jack (?) fruits ; hermit laments over the death of his pet deer and the Bodhisattva remonstrates with him—a representation presumably of the 'Miga-potaka-jātaka' (Fassiboll, 372 ; Hultzsch and Barua) ; griffin running. A most characteristic formal quality of Śunga art is its flowing linear rhythm that binds all isolated objects in one continuous stream of life as it were. Look at any coping stone and you will find a huge stout lotus-stalk flowing in rhythmical waves from form to form, not only binding each isolated item in one whole but permeating each isolated object itself, including the limbs of human beings, the animals and the trees with the same flowing linear rhythm C. 150 B. C. Photo : A. S. I. (See Page 111)

MAURYA AND SUNGA ART

ABBREVIATIONS

- A. S. R.*.—Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.
A. S. R. E. C..— " " " Eastern Circle, Annual Report.
C. A. H..—Cambridge Ancient History.
C. H. I..—Cambridge History of India, Vol. I.
C. I. I..—Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. I.
I. A..—Indian Antiquary.
I. H. Q..—Indian Historical Quarterly.
J. A. S. B..—Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
J. B. O. R. S..—Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society.
J. D. L..—Journal of the Department of Letters, Calcutta University.
J. I. S. O. A..—Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art.
J. R. A. S..—Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
M. A. S. I..—Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India.
P. H. A. I..—Political History of Ancient India, 4th Edition, by H. C. Raichandhuri.
Z. D. M. G..—Zeitschrift der Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

MAURYA AND SUNGA ART

NOTES

1. St. Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, pp. 3-7.
2. Th. Bloch, Excavation at Lauriya, *A. S. R.*, 1906-7, pp. 122 ff.; A. B. Keith, *C. H. I. I.* p. 97; E. W. Hopkins, *C. H. I.*, 1. p. 232; *Saṅkhyayana Grihya Sūtra*, IV. 19; L. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, I, pp. 14-15.
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4. J. Marshall, Excavations at Bhita, *A. S. R.*, 1911-12, p. 4, pl. 22, 1.
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6. *Ibid*; Maltra, A. K., Origin of the bell-capital, *I. H. Q.*, VII, pp. 224-25, 233-44.
7. K. P. Jayaswal, Statues of Śaśunāga Emperors, *J. B. O. R. S.*, V, pp. 88-106. The discussion continued through vols. V and VI of the same journal and a number of scholars including R. D. Banerji, V. A. Smith, L. D. Barnett and H. P. Sastri joined. It was further taken up by R. P. Chanda, Four Ancient Yaksha Statues, *J. D. L.*, Cal. Univ., IV, pp. 47-54; Inscriptions on Two Patna Statues in the Indian Museum, *I. A.* XLVIII, pp. 25-28; R. C. Majumdar, Alleged Śaśunāga Statues, *ibid*, pp. 419-424; O. C. Gangoly, A note on Mr. Jayaswal's Discovery of Two Śaśunāga Statues, *Modern Review*, 1919, October, pp. 419-24 and A. R. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collection in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, 1923, pt. II, p. 4; *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 16-17.
8. Waddell, *Report on Excavations at Pataliputra*, Calcutta, 1903, pp. 22-26; Spooner, *A. S. R.*, 1912-13, pp. 78 ff.; *A. S. R. E. O.* 1915-16, pp. 27-28; McGrindle, *Ancient India*, 1901, p. 42.
9. Other architectural and sculptural remains that are generally ascribed to the Maurya period, on either stylistic or traditional grounds include (1) a railing (?) pillar with inscription from the Arjunapura site, Mathura, now lost; (2) the oldest parts, subsequently enclosed by later additions, of stūpas; (3) foundations of chaitya-halls at Sanchi and Sonari (4) two Patna Yaksha Statues, now in the Indian Museum; (5) a few fragments of grey polished stone-sculptures from Sarnath; (6) a few fragments of sculptures in red spotted sand stone from Mathura; (7) a fragmentary relief from Bhita; (8) fragments of a ribbed polished stone umbrella from Sanchi; (9) two carved perforated circular stone plaques from the Bhir mound site, Taxila; (10) a considerable number of terracottas from such widely separated sites as Sarnath, Basarh, Bulandibagh, Kumrahar and other places round about the old site of Pāṭaliputra, Bhita, Nagri, Mathura, Kosam, Sāñkīśya and Taxila; (11) a *chauri*-bearing yakshi statue from Didarganj; (12) a more than life-size statue from Parkham; (13) a torso of a yaksha or king from Baroda, Mathura; (14) a seated image now worshipped as Manasā from near Parkham; (15) two polished stone images with legs and heads broken off, of naked Jaina Tīrthaṅkars from Lohanipur, near

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Patna, and now in the Patna Museum and (16) a hooded serpent canopy from Rajgir. About nos. 1, 2, and 3 we are not in a position to make any definite assertion; the only argument that labels no. 8 as Mauryan is the glossy polish of the stone; it is difficult to say anything about the date of no. 9; here too the main argument rests on the glossy polish of the stone. To try to date terracottas on stylistic grounds alone is often dangerous as has so convincingly been shown by Kramrisch and Gordon; item no. 10 and nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, I shall have occasion to refer to and discuss at a later stage.

10. See McCrindle, cited above.

11. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, chap. III; Brown, *Indian Architecture; Buddhist and Hindu*, chaps. II-VI.

12. *C. H. I.*, I. p. 206.

13. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, 2nd edn. I, pp. 75-76; for alleged pre-Mauryan antiquities, see Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 10 and notes; for Lauriya-Nandangarh gold-plaque of nude female, see *ibid.* fig. 105.

14. Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas*, 1920, p. 231; *Sutta-Nipata*, p. 90, Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, part 2, p. 13 etc.; Chanda cites authorities in *The Beginnings of Art in Eastern India*, p. 13 ff.

15. Raichaudhuri, *P. H. A. I.*, 4th edn.

16. A Suez Inscription of Darius, in Tolman, *Ancient Persian Lexicon and Texts*, New York, 1909, p. 50.

17. In West Asia the idea of the conquest of the "four regions" or "four quarters" originated with the kings of Babylonia and Assyria. But it was actually realised later by the Achaemenian monarchs, notably Cyrus, his son Cambyses, Darius, son of Hystaspes. In a Suez inscription commemorating the completion of the canal from the Nile to the Red Sea Darius proudly records: "I (am) Darius, the great king, king of kings, king of countries possessing all people, (king) of this great earth far and wide." The phrases are almost exactly such as we find in the *Aitareya Brahmana* and *Baudhayana Shrauta Sutra*. Also, see Chanda, *Beginnings of Art*, pp. 17-20.

18. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian*, pp. 11-14 where the whole aspect is fully discussed.

19. *Ibid.* p. 22.

20. Marshall, *A Guide to Taxila*, pp. 9, 77-78.

21. Plutarch quoted by Chanda, *Beginnings*..., p. 18.

22. Sarre, *Die Kunst des Alten Persiens*, pp. 20-25; Carotti, *A History of Art*, I, pp. 93-94; Bell, *Early Architecture in Western Asia*, p. 231.

23. Hultsch, *C. I. I.*, I, pp. xxiv-xxv; *C. H. I.*, I, p. 423; Bevan, *The House of Seleucus*, Lond. 1902, I, p. 297; Smith, *Early History of India*, pp. 123 ff; *Persian Influence on Mauryan India*, I.A. 1905, p. 261-3.

23a. I owe this reference to Prof. H. C. Raichaudhuri.

24. McCrindle, *Ancient India*; Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, Shamasastri's edn.

25. Tarn, W. W., *Hellenistic Civilisation*, chap. VII, pp. 193-214; Jouguet, *Macedonian Imperialism*, pp. 93-107, 353, 358.

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26. Marshall, *Guide to Taxila*; A. S. R., pt. I, 1920—21, p. 20, pl. XVI, fig. 2.
27. Bachhofer, *op. cit.* p. 12, pl. 13; A. S. R., pt. I, 1917—18, p. 27, pl. XVI, fig. 2; *ibid.*, 1919—14, p. 182, no. 791; pl. XIII, fig. (b). Read with this Nearchus' statement to the effect that "the Indians quickly learnt to make Greek articles such as the scrapers and oil-flasks used by athletes" C. H. I., I, p. 418. For the phil-Hellenism of the Mauryas see also Raychaudhuri, P. H. A. I. 4th edn. pp. 246—47.
28. A. S. R., pl. I, 1919—20, p. 23, pl. XI, fig. 2.
29. C. A. H., VI, 1927, p. 492; C. H. I., I, pp. 319—44.
30. C. H. I. I, p. 559; Smith *Early History of India*, 4th edn. pp. 65—66.
31. Mitra, Origin of the Bell-capital, I. H. Q., VII, pp. 229—30.
32. McGrindle, Waddell and Spooner, *op. cit.*
33. Chanda, *Beginnings...* p. 12.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 17—20.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 21—25.
36. I. A., XX, pp. 255—56.
37. Chanda, *Beginnings...* p. 23.
38. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, p. 18; Hultzsch, C. I. I. I.
39. Smith, The Monolithic Pillars of Aśoka, Z. D. M. G., 1911.
40. Chanda, *Beginnings...* pp. 31—33.
41. Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Persia*, pp. 87—88.
42. A. S. R., 1909—09, pp. 123—24, pl. XL; also see, Mitra, Mauryan Art, I. H. Q., III, pp. 643—45.
43. J. R. A. S., 1908, p. 1088.
44. C. H. I. I, p. 620.
45. Carotil, *A History of Art*, I, p. 218, fig. 298.
46. Perrot and Chipiez, *History of Art in Persia*, p. 407, fig. 195; C. H. I., I, p. 403, pl. II, figs. 1 and 2.
47. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, I, p. 6—7.
48. Marshall, Chanda, Kramrisch, Coomaraswamy, Bachhofer, indeed all authorities have so far ascribed these sculptures to the Maurya period.
49. Jayaswal, Jaina Image of the Maurya Period, J. B. O. R. S., XXII, pp. 180—82 and plates.
50. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian & Indonesian Art*, p. 17, fig. 15; Vogel, Mathura School of Sculpture, A. S. R., 1909—10, p. 76, pl. XXVIII, a.
51. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, I, plate. 62.
52. Chanda, Mathura School of Sculpture, A. S. R. 1922—23, p. 164; A. S. R. 1920—21, pl. XVIII.
53. Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, I, pp. 12—14, plates, 12 and 13; Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian & Indonesian Art*, pp. 19—20, figs. 18, 19, 20, 22, 23. Fig. 21 of Coomaraswamy is much later still.
54. Kramrisch, *Grundzüge der Indischen Kunst*, pl. 48; *Indian Sculpture*, p. 12, fig. 11.

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55. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 20, fig. 13.
56. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.* p. 20—21, figs. 16, 23, 57, 60.
57. Kramrisch, *J. I. S. O. A.*, Gordon, *J. I. S. O. A.* Vols. VII and XI respectively.
58. *Ibid.* Kramrisch.
59. Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.* fig. 41.
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61. Fergusson, *op. cit.* p. 130.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 132; Brown, *op. cit.* p. 13.
63. Fergusson, *op. cit.* p. 131—32; Brown, *op. cit.* p. 13.
64. *Ibid.*
65. Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture*, p. 11—12.
66. Bachhofer, *op. cit.* plate 14.
67. Fergusson, *op. cit.* chaps. IV—VI; Brown, *op. cit.* chaps II and III; Smith, *History of Fine Art in India & Ceylon*, p. 21—23.
68. *J. A. S. B.*, 1910, pp. 259 ff.
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72. *P. H. A. I.* pp. 243—44.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 304, f. n. 1.
74. *Ibid.*, f. n. 2.
75. Barua, B. M. *op. cit.* p. 179. Here as elsewhere I am following Barua's translation and interpretation.
76. Barua, *op. cit.* p. 182.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 187. and f. n. 5.
78. *Ibid.*, pp. 224—26.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 249—250.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 250—52.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
82. Barua, *Barhut*, II, p. 9—11.
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Fig. 33



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ADDENDA & CORRIGENDA

- P. 2, line 27, *for* Piprawha Stupa *read* Piprahwa Stūpa.
 " " 28, *for* earlier that *read* earlier than that.
 P. 3, " 3, *for* my *read* may.
 P. 19, " 2, *for* Hundred columns *read* Hundred Columns.
 P. 20, " 31, *for* R. E. XXIV *read* R. E. XIV.
 P. 24, lines 11, 19 & 23 *for* Sāhkiśya *read* Śāhkiśya.
 P. 25, line 7, Barua now thinks that the word 'vigadabhi' stands for 'vigatabhi'='vigata-
 bhaya'—free from fear; and alludes to the widely known magical practice of
 purifying all erections and thus rendering them free from fear.
 P. 12, line 19, *for* Here is *read* Here are.
 P. 51, " 14, *for* little or on *read* little or no.
 P. 62, " 12, *for* western Asiatic *read* Western Asiatic.
 P. 67, " 3, *for* edict One *read* Edict One
 P. 72, " 19, *for* un-aryan *read* un-Aryan
 P. 77, " 14, *for* Sirima *read* Sirimā.
 P. 83, lines 3 & 9, *for* Sirima *read* Sirimā
 Wherever it occurs, *for* Pāṭaliputra *read* Pātaliputra.

In cases of proper names diacritical marks have been avoided as far as possible; they have been used only in cases of less familiar names.

In the running title, *for* Sunga *read* Śunga. This has been due to the absence in the press of diacritical marks in the particular font. For the same reason it has not been possible to use marks in italics.

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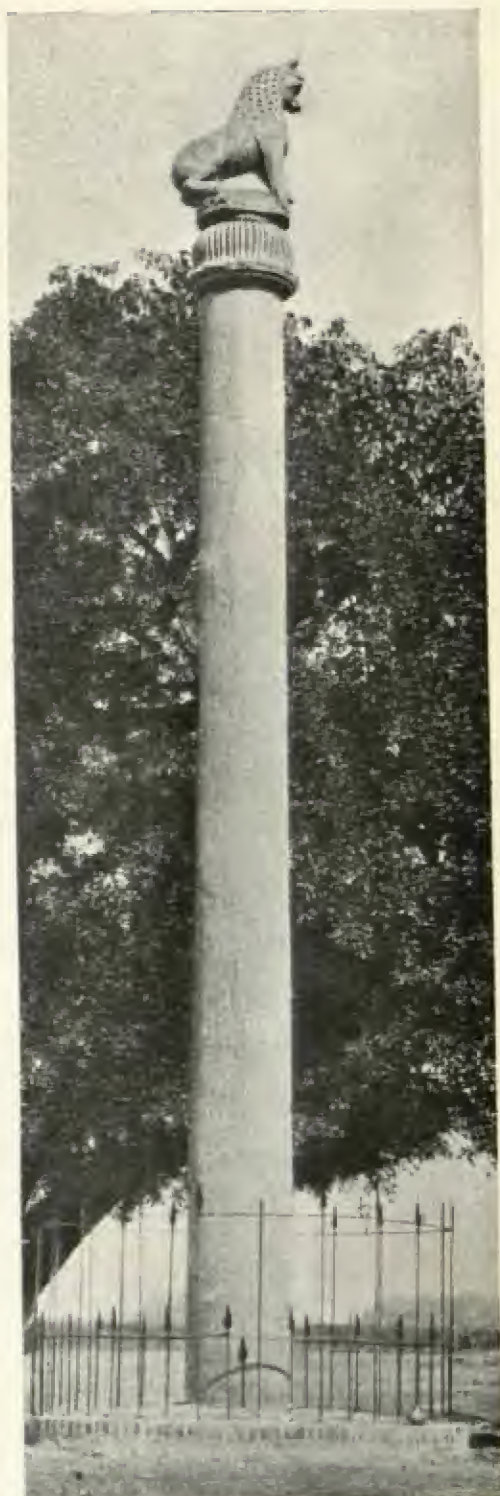
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БОЗРАЧ - БОКНИК

1



ЛАВУН - НАНДАНГАЛ

2





DRAOLI





4

SANKHSYA



5

SANCHI











RAMBURVA.

9

SARATHI







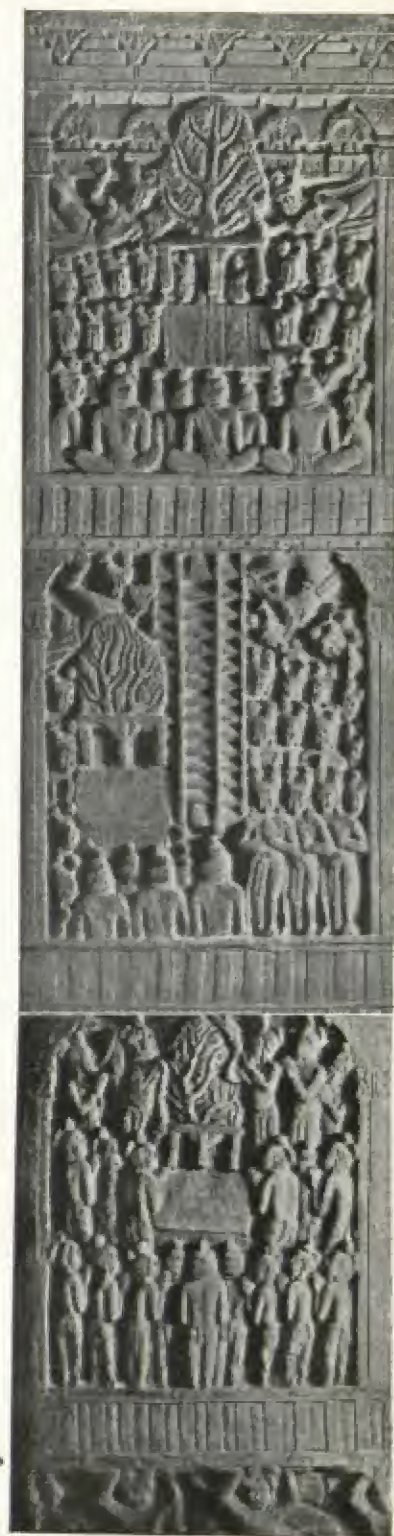
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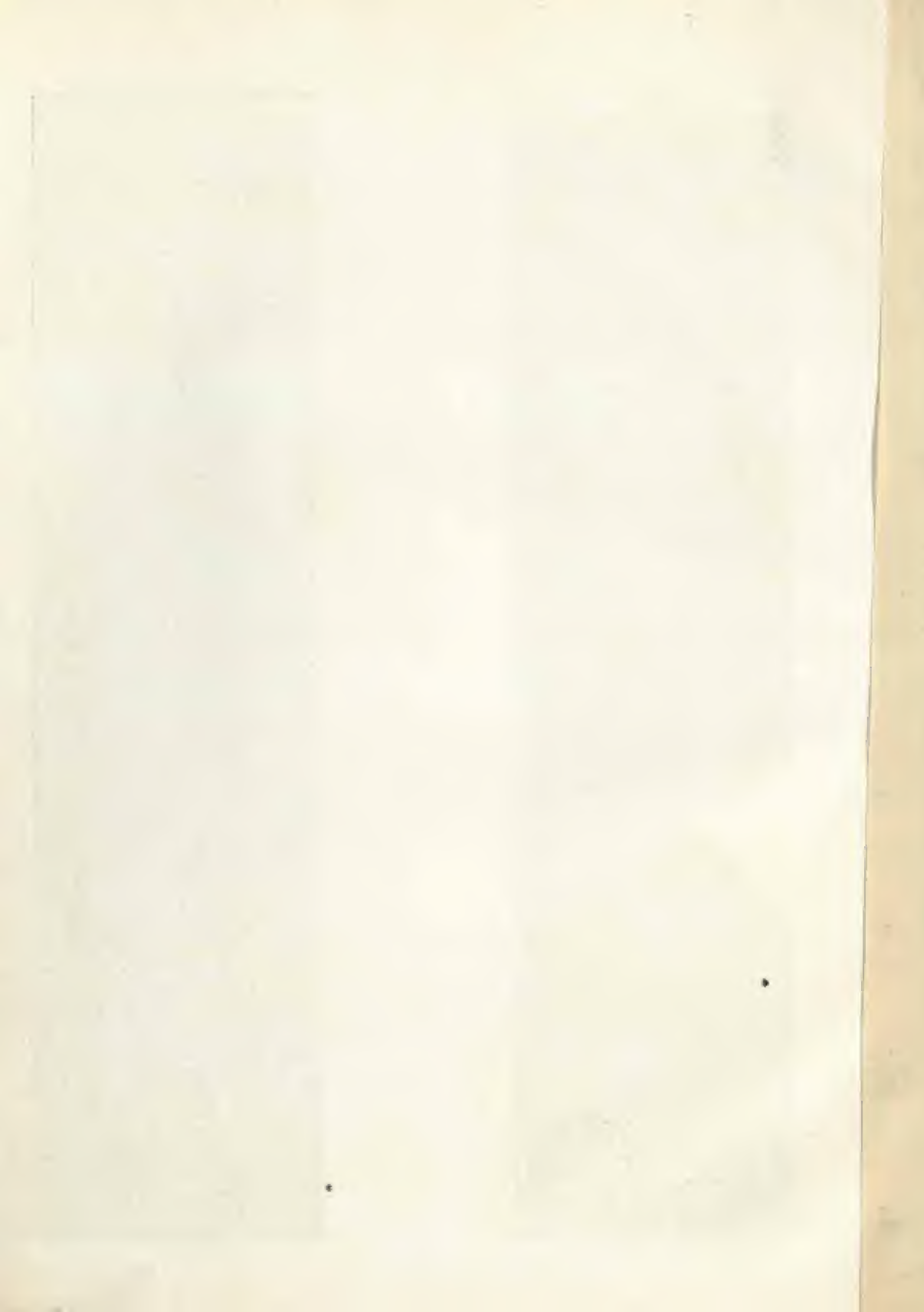
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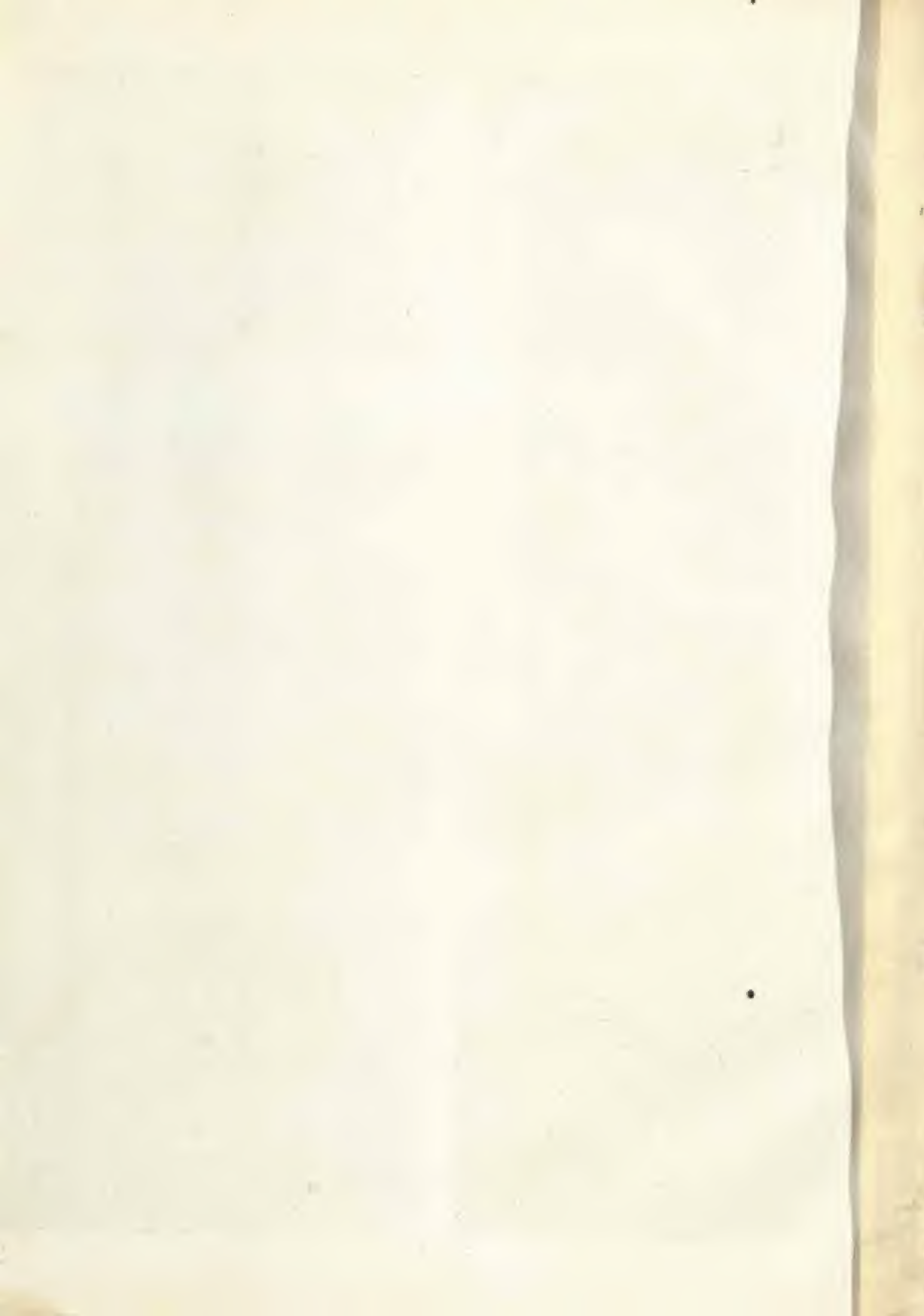




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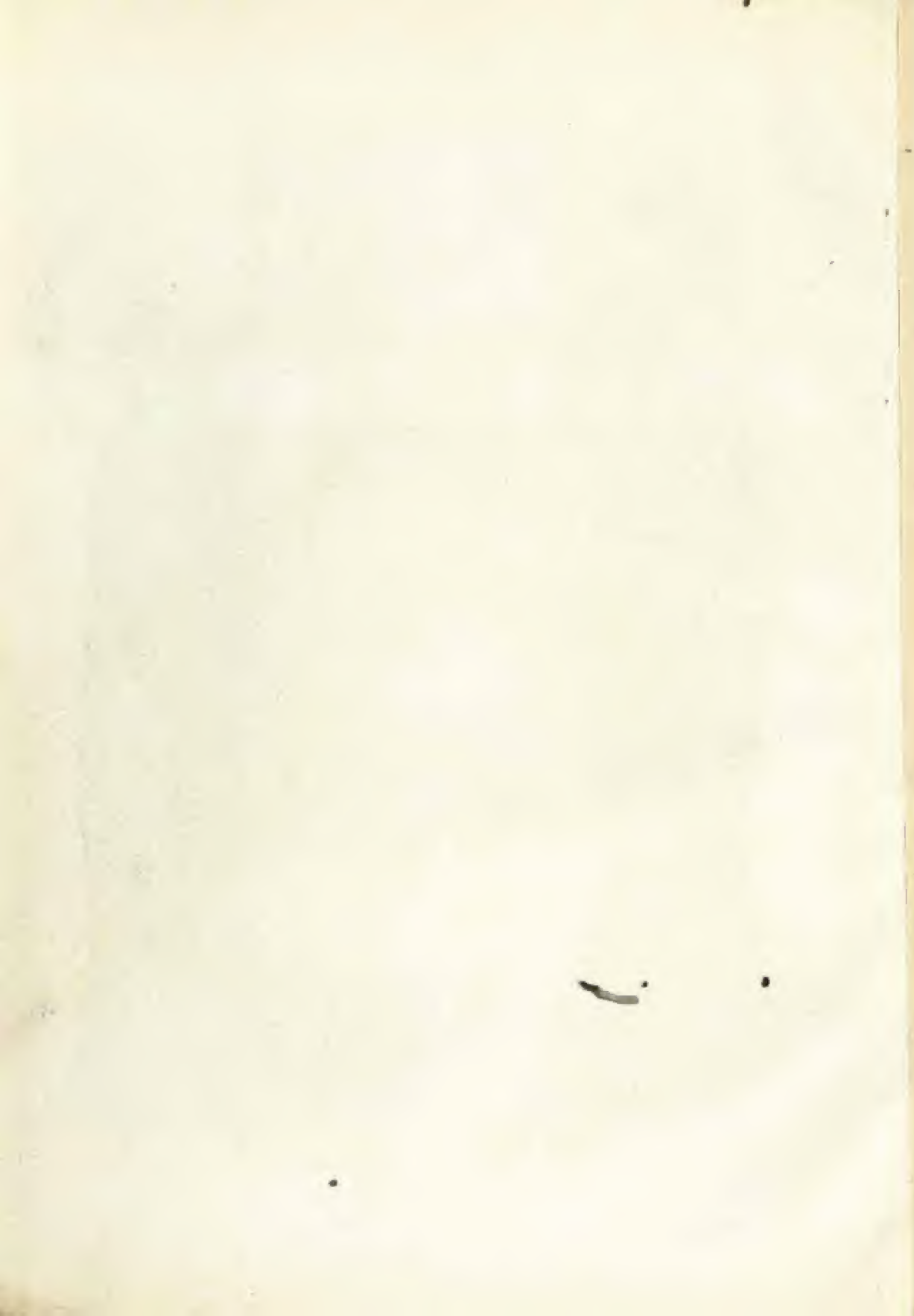




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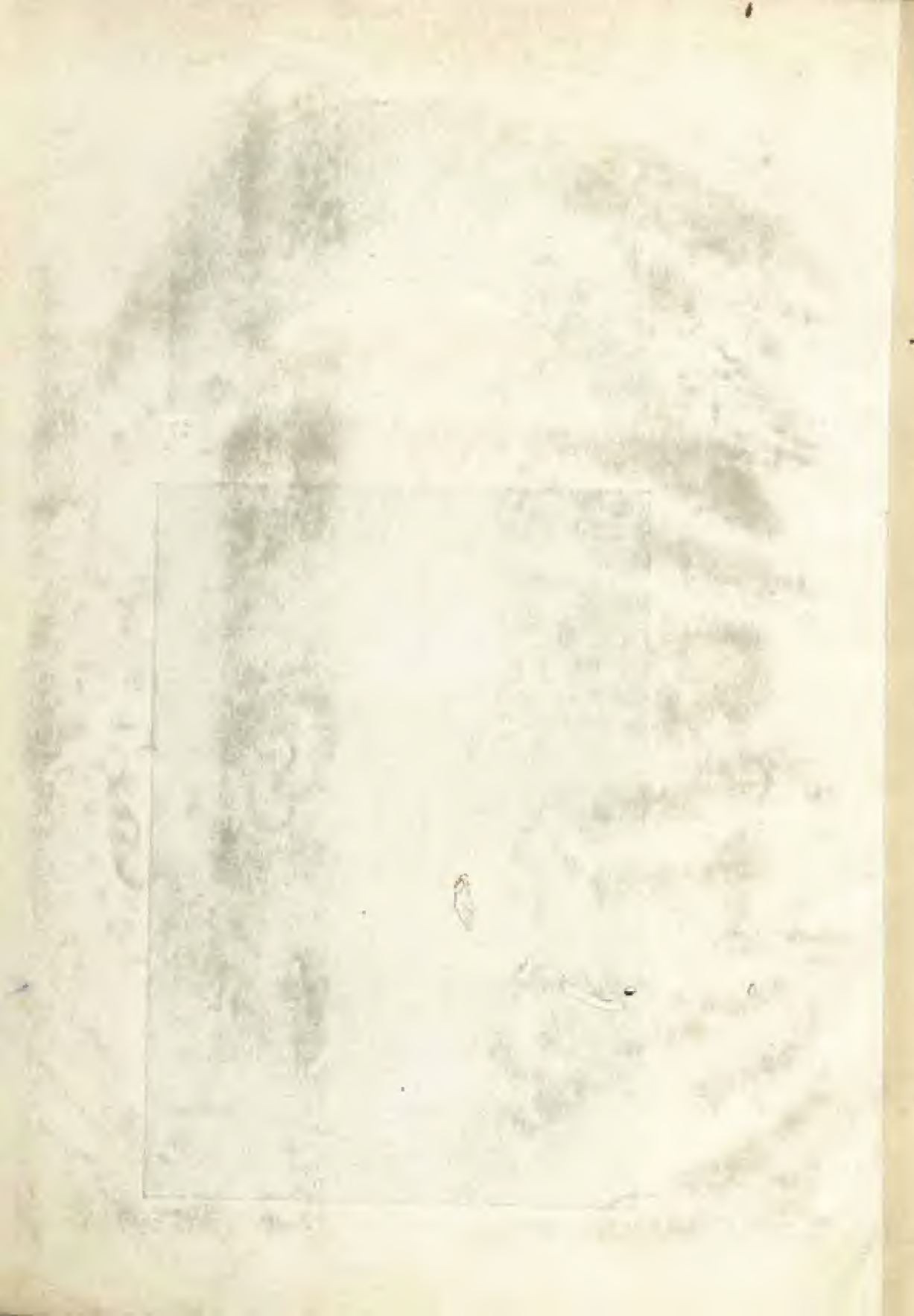




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CATALOGUE

Art - Maurya Dynasty

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